

INTERVIEW M20-SG5: JERRY GRADY

Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
Interviewee: Jerry Grady [pseudonym]
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Transcriber: Naomi Wells

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

BH: Okay, so that's us off and running. Okay, so it's the thirtieth of October 2020 and I'm here at about eleven o'clock in the morning with Jerry Grady. Before we begin Jerry, I'd just like to say thanks very much for agreeing to do the interview and for taking the time to take part this morning.

JG: No problem.

BH: So I'll just begin, as I said, with talking a bit about your memories of growing up, and the question I always start with is when and where were you born?

JG: Sorry, it's just cutting out a little bit.

BH: Okay.

JG: Yeah, I didn't get the question.

BH: Okay, no problem. The question was when and where you born?

JG: Oh I was born in Sheffield, 1992, yeah, grew up there for about three or four years, but don't really have any memories of that. My sort of earliest memories were when we moved to Manchester, or to Manchester Way, I should say.

BH: And is that where you mainly grew up then in Manchester?

JG: Yeah, yeah, we had a brief stint in Stockport and then moved out to Wilmslow.

BH: Ah right, okay. Wilmslow's quite a nice area.

JG: Yeah, yeah, really nice, really nice place to grow up and, yeah, be around.

BH: And what did your parents do?

JG: My mum at the time was a probation officer and she then has gone on to start teaching at a university, at Salford University, and my dad has been also a lecturer at university in art and design, and has sort of moved on to some more administrative stuff now, but very much part of the university there, at Manchester Met.

BH: Oh at Manchester Met, right.

JG: Yeah, or at the uni, he might, I can't remember, it's one of the two, I should know that really, shouldn't I [laughs]. In all truth I think he does a little bit of, he does a bit of crossover for both, but I'm not, I can't actually remember.

BH: Yeah, they're both quite close together geographically, so you'd be forgiven for getting them mixed up.

JG: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BH: So where did you go to school then?

JG: I just went to the local school at Ashdene and then I went on to Wilmslow High School for a few, for my high school years as well.

BH: Is that right, yeah?

JG: Yeah.

BH: My partner actually teaches at Wilmslow High School.

JG: Oh really?

BH: Yeah.

JG: I've got, I've got good memories and bad memories.

BH: Yeah [laughs], my next question is going to be did you enjoy school?

JG: Pfff, I, I always found, I, I struggled with authority quite a lot as a child. I couldn't quite understand why some teachers were the way they were. I, like, I really got on with some teachers throughout primary school and high school. I, like, could click with teachers quite well and I'd be no trouble and there'd be some teachers where I'd really struggle with, so I'm sure if you rounded up all my teachers there'd be half opposing views and half great views, so, on me. Looking back, but yeah, I think like, I had dyslexia as well, which although it was quite mild, a quite mild form of dyslexia, I sort of struggled to concentrate in classes and so on and that could have been seen as me messing about and so on, and I can see with hindsight why some teachers probably got a bit annoyed at me, but overall I, very social, enjoyed school, still friends with a lot of my friends that I grew up with in primary school and through to high school to this day, so yeah, good memories looking back, and then I also did a stint at Repton School for my A-levels as well, which is in Derbyshire.

BH: Oh right.

JG: Yeah, I went there on a football scholarship and that was very like, a very different school to, say, Wilmslow High was in terms of the structure and everything that went on there, so that was just again, I probably knuckled down a little bit more there and matured a little bit and just got on with my A-levels there, and I was playing football at the time as well, so again, I'd probably say most of the teachers I got on with there and, yeah, good memories looking back on it.

BH: That's really interesting, cos Wilmslow's quite a sport orientated school, isn't it?

JG: Yeah, well, I had this, they did a gifted and talented, it was sort of in the era of funding for gifted and talented schools and Wilmslow High had become a sports school and I think, so I was there and I played for Man United at the time as a kid and they put me in this gifted and talented bracket, which I just thought was a bit ridiculous, and it was, I always felt it, they were doing it more for this funding that that they had to get instead of actually doing anything to help me. So I, like, they'd try and get me to go to meetings and so on where I'd just sit down and basically talk about how I'm getting on at school, and I just like, it sort of fizzled out quite quickly, I probably imagine they, when they got the funding for it all, but it became less of an issue, but what they started to do, which I think they pushed so many people onto this gifted and talented platform it kind of devalued it as a whole, and I'm sure they've got it right now, but it was the very first time of doing it and I just felt it was all a little bit exaggerated and over the top, if that makes sense.

BH: And was this gifted and talented, was it an academic thing or was that to do with your excellence at sport?

JG: Oh completely, completely to do with sport, yeah, yeah, yeah. It was all, they'd just turned to becoming this like, a sports school, I can't remember what the name they gave it, but they gave it some fancy name and I, like, that was my first year there, so I think it just, yeah, they hadn't quite got it right and we were all the guinea pigs for it and I felt like it was a bit of a waste of time, so.

BH: Yeah, it sounds though that sport and in particular football was a big part of your growing up?

JG: Yes, yeah, it probably formed my identity really, sort of, although, not that I always liked that, but everybody sort of knew me as Jerry the footballer. I've sort of, I'd started off at Man City when I was eight or nine, had a couple of, well, a year there, didn't quite go right, played for sort of the local team, we were always in the newspaper, I much preferred that because it was with my mates, and then eventually got signed by United at eleven.

BH. Right.

JG: So, and then that was sort of, everybody in the area would sort of have known me at the time as, and at school and all of that, would have known me as Jerry the footballer, whereas

I was quite happy just to be, just to be me, but I think any kid that plays for Man United or a big football club they're going to get that tag.

BH: Sure, so what kind of contract is that whenever you're eleven? It's not an apprentice presumably.

JG: No, no, it's, I don't even know what they would call it now, I just think an academy player, yeah, simple as that really.

BH: So presumably then at that young of an age if you are signing contracts with Man United, that's beginning to shape your career plans as you get older.

JG: Yeah, yeah, it's, well, that was sort of the path and obviously I went on that journey, even at like, sort of the early ages I think I was aware enough to know that like, I'm going to have to put in a lot of hard work, which I did, to even get anywhere in the game, so, what am I trying to say, basically like, at eleven, twelve, thirteen you're still, although everyone thinks you're going to be the next Wayne Rooney or the next David Beckham at that time, you still know that like, it's quite a long way off and you've still got a lot of hurdles to jump. See I never really got too carried away with it, I just, I sort of took it each year as it was, just keep making sure that I'm still there next year and still there next year and still there next year, and that really, well, that worked really, just sort of, that sort of short term, just focus on this season and don't get carried away with it.

BH: Was it, I guess it could be quite a lot of pressure as well, as you say, being identified as Jerry the footballer.

JG: Yeah.

BH: It's an identity being thrust upon you as well I suppose.

JG: Yeah, I think my parents did quite well at shielding me from that. They obviously were quite big on education, with both of their backgrounds, and I'd sort of always knew like, I wanted to do my A-levels and like, I was interested in other things like, I'm doing psychology at university now and I hadn't got quite round to being interested in psychology, but I think I was interested in art, well, I was interested in art, English, a few like, a few other subjects, wasn't quite sure, but I knew I would always, there would always be something that I'd be interested in if football didn't work out, whereas there was a lot of sort of my teammates at the time who were very much, football's the only thing, which [00:10:00] was fine, but I always felt it was like, you've got to have more interests than just football, so yeah.

BH: So whenever, you went on a football scholarship to do your A-levels, in Derbyshire somewhere.

JG: Yeah, at Repton School, so I did that for two years. Basically I was offered, there was a bit of a, I was sort of at fifteen, I wasn't offered anything or they were sort of saying look, we're probably not going to offer you anything for your scholarship at Man United, so my dad started looking at other options. I then had a really good season and United said oh

we'll give you a two-year scholarship, but by that time I'd sort of had a lot of clubs saying we'll take you, let you do your A-levels at Repton and then you can like, we'll give you a longer contract, and Wolves gave me essentially a four-year contract, and I just felt at the time, probably with hindsight I probably would have done things a little bit differently, but I just felt at the time that it was the right thing for me to go and do, and I saw more of a way into the first team at Wolves when I signed there, and I could definitely see a way through, whereas at Man United I just thought I'm going to end up like every other player that goes through, cos at that time there wasn't, although you'd had all of the era of the class of '92 and so on, there hadn't really been anyone breaking through into Man United's first team for quite a while. You'd maybe get one, but they'd leave after, when they were, say, twenty-one or so, but now they've sort of gone back to the old mould and are bringing as many players through as possible, which is great, but at the time I just felt like Wolves was a better option for me, and I got to do my A-levels, go to a great school and, yeah, it, yeah, all went to plan really.

BH: So did you then make the Wolves first team?

JG: Yeah, I played one Premier League game, trained with them for most of the time I was there, trained as part of the first team, sort of worked, worked my way up over the four years I was there and then in the final year, the change of manager, things obviously change in football quite quickly and I found myself at twenty being released by Wolves and then looking for other clubs, so, but that's just part of football I guess, so.

BH: And did you look, did you find another club then?

JG: Yeah, yeah, I went and played for Leyton Orient for a year and then after that I went sort of into non-league and so on, and then obviously got around to about twenty-two, twenty-three and started looking at, although I could have played non-league for a few years and done okay, I sort of looked, is this sustainable for a longer period of time and am I going to be potentially setting myself back years in the future if I don't start with trying to look at something different. At that point I'd been doing an Open Uni degree at, in psychology, so I'd done a few years of doing that and I was very interested in psychology, sort of really knew I wanted to go into that, was quite fascinated by how everything in football, with like, mindsets and psychology worked and so on. In fact, I probably enjoyed speaking to like, the counsellors or the psychologists that came in at Wolves and other clubs more than I did playing football, so I just quickly realised that that was something I was really interested in and wanted to do for the long term.

BH: So then you went to university about, aged twenty-two or so then?

JG: No, I'm twenty-eight now, I was twenty-eight on Monday, so I came to uni at twenty-five, so I'm in my third year now.

BH: Third year.

JG: This year, and then I'm going to do a masters as well, next year.

BH: And did you play uni, or did you play football at uni?

JG: Yeah, yeah, I still play, play for the uni team, I was training this morning, and I play for a local team as well, just to keep me ticking over and just to, just, but it's not my main focus now, it's, but it's just something I still enjoy doing.

BH: What about your parents then? What did they think about your decisions?

JG: I think they were always fairly supportive. I haven't even mentioned the Northern Ireland stuff with football yet, so, but like, I, throughout my sort of growing up at United it was, not that it was up and down, up and down, but there was a sort of a few seasons like, a season where it wasn't going quite so well and they were always quite supportive and aware that like, look, it's, we're not going to think differently of you just cos you're not playing for Man United anymore, whereas I know some parents would pressure their kids into, cos it's almost like, their way out like, a bit of a meal ticket out, and I put that generally across the board of football clubs and how it's run, I think a lot of parents unfortunately see it for the wrong reasons instead of just seeing it as something that their kids can go and do and develop and if it works out, great, but let's not form a whole identity around them just being a footballer, let's try and make sure that they know that there's other things that they can do and they're not just going to be judged solely on how they do on a football pitch for ninety minutes, which like, you've got a long life and other things that you can be interested in, so I think on that front my parents always were quite grounding, even when it was going really well they were still quite grounding, and I'd probably say that has, that definitely helped later down the line, having that sort of support and knowing that my parents weren't really that, not that they weren't bothered, but they weren't, they weren't overwhelmed by it, or they were, and like, they were more protective of it, making sure that they knew I knew that there wasn't like, a ridiculous pressure from having to make it, as they say in football.

BH: Yeah, what about your parents' background then? Where were they from themselves?

JG: So my mum's from Coleraine and she grew up there. She moved over and went to Sheffield Uni when she was about eighteen, nineteen, I'm sure she's probably already told you this, but yeah, she, she moved over and think she planned to only come over for a few years and then move back and in that time she met my dad, and my dad's got big Irish heritage from the South of Ireland, obv-, like, grew up in Manchester, born and raised, but always sort of in his household a strong Irish background and values and so on, so he's never really identified himself as being English like, he's got an Irish passport, he would see himself as an Irish citizen.

BH: Were your parents, were their backgrounds important in your development when you were growing up?

JG: Well, I think the like, the, I think when I was growing up it was always, whenever my mates were supporting England, my dad was like, no, you can't do that. Obviously being young, and I remember it was like, David Beckham and people like that at the time playing for England, and they were people that I liked, so naturally you want to watch them and

support them, and then my dad was always very much aware of, to make sure that I didn't support them in, in an English way of like, cos I'm English I support them, so whereas now like, I don't even, I would never even dream of watching England, and especially like, in the rugby I'd always be supporting Ireland, so that was sort of early memories of any time sort of England were on my dad was very, made sure that like, we weren't supporting England, it was more cos I just like watching the players [laughs], put it that way.

BH: And what did you think about that, being prohibited from identifying with David Beckham and people like that?

JG: I think it was one of those like, I think you're so young you sort of, cos you're growing up and you've got your peer influence that comes in at that age and all your mates are supporting England and so on and you're like, I look back on it now and like, I can see why I was attracted to that, but now I completely see why I don't support them at all, so like, I've got an Irish passport myself, I don't really identify as being English, other than my accent and where I was born. I wouldn't sort of turn round like, if I met someone and they said oh like, oh are you English, I'd be like, no, I'm not, but again, but I wouldn't be going shouting about oh I'm Irish, because I think a lot of people like to do that these days, sort of overdo their Irish heritage and I think that can be a little bit annoying for some Irish people that I've met, and I've had chats with people who have said that, said the one thing they hate at the moment is all, a lot of English people just say oh my grandma's Irish, so that means that we've got something in common, [00:20:00] so I'm quite sort of aware of not trying to overdo it, but also like, that is my heritage and that is my background and sort of my dad's, my dad and my mum from sort of the North and South have both sort of raised me in that sort of culture and values and how they do things, which is a little, slightly different to what would have happened if I was raised by English parents in the same, next door.

BH: Yeah, it sounds like then over the course of your childhood your views about that kind of changed a bit.

JG: Yeah, I'd put that down to sort of the peer influence of what your mates are doing, which is quite common in young kids, but like, quickly I, like, I had an Irish football shirt, was proud to wear it, all stuff like that, so it like, it was more just the getting swept up in what your mates were thinking, but then obvious- or doing, and wanting to be like your mates, but I actually got to the point where I, like, enjoyed wearing my Ireland shirt out because it would sort of get people like, get some of my mates' backs up and they'd be like, oh why are you even wearing that, you're not even Irish and all that stuff, so I quite, I actually quite enjoyed it, so if anything it became sort of a point of pride for me.

BH: I'm guessing, though I might be wrong, that there weren't that many other Irish kids in Wilmslow growing up.

JG: No, no, well, again, this is the thing, you get a lot of people who say oh yeah, my grandma's from such and such a place, which is great like, great to hear, but I think everybody that, that's usually what the conversations go with some people, they go oh yeah, I do actually have some Irish heritage, or the interesting thing is that they do and they

don't even know it and they don't even, they've never even looked into it, which is a bit of a shame really.

BH: Yeah, it sounds like as well whenever you started to wear, you know, your Irish jersey it gave you a bit of an identity, as in it marked out as slightly different from all your friends who were all wearing the England top.

JG: Definitely, yeah, oh I quite liked being different, so yeah, it's, that was definitely a point of identity and pride and just wanting to do my own thing and not be like everyone else I guess, which I guess is what my personality is a little bit like.

BH: So would your parents then have talked about Ireland and Irish culture and so on at home?

JG: Well, we had, yeah, we had a lot of visits across like, we'd go across once, twice a year, summers, Christmases, spend a lot of time over there like, my cousins are essentially like, my close cousins, there's a big network of family over there, but my close cousins are essentially like siblings cos we spent that much time with them growing up, even though they were in Belfast and we were in south Manchester, Cheshire, so like, we went on holidays with each other and so on and so, but yeah, often like, even like, now like, my dad'll, I'll come home and my dad will start talking about something in Irish history that I didn't know or talk through things that like, I've not heard before or recommend a book or so on so forth.

BH: You mentioned there that you'd often go on holidays to Belfast. Which was the more important focus, your father's Southern background or your mother's Northern background?

JG: Definitely my mum's, because of immediate family being there. So I think my first trip to the South was playing football when I was about fifteen, so I got basically, obviously I was playing for United at the time, and I had Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland football federations both contacting me for a while, and basically the Republic had said come down for a trial or fly over for a trial, come and play, see how you get on, went and then I sort of, not really thinking too much into it at the time, but went and did the trial and got in the, like, they picked me for the next squad and it sort of happened so quickly that I think the North were quite annoyed about it because they had more of a claim to me, I think due to the fact that my mum was from Northern Ireland and so on, and was more of a direct relative, cos we had sort of my godmother, her brother or one of her family members, some form of family member of my godmother, who's also Northern Irish, had worked for the IFA, the Northern Irish, the Northern Irish FA.

BH: Yeah, it's the Northern Irish one, yeah.

JG: And they'd been trying, they'd been tracking me for a long time and trying to get me to go over and so on, and I think they'd felt like, the Republic had just come in and sort of picked me like, in front of their noses, so basically, that happened very quickly, I went and played in a few games for them and I just, for whatever reason it like, it just didn't feel right,

and I don't mean that in like, a, like, a country, I mean more the footballing terms of it. I was used to Man United, a very high standard of how they did things, whereas at the Republic it was all quite shabby and sort of, it just didn't feel professional enough in terms of footballing terms like, I played in a few games like, the, it was, they weren't that enjoyable to play in, the style of football wasn't that great, and I know I was probably at the time very used to attacking style of football at United, but just anything, just a lot of things that I didn't enjoy about the trips, and it just got to the point where the IFA, I think there was, I don't know whether how true this is, but I was told that like, they were looking to sort of put a legal request in on this because they felt so like, that I should be playing for them, eventually I just turned round and said to my dad, look, just ring them up and say I'd rather come and just have a few games for them and see how it is with them because I'm not really enjoying this, and it just clicked straight away, to be honest, when I went over there, met all of like, the lads I'm still friends with some of the lads now like, really good friends with them, which is rare in football, to know people that long after you, you've been playing with them, so and, yeah, just clicked, really enjoyed it, worked my way up through the youth team quite quickly and then at seventeen I was called up to the first team.

BH: Right.

JG: Yeah, so I was in Nigel Worthington's squad for about two years, got nine caps.

BH: That's amazing.

JG: Yeah, played against some, played against Italy, Serbia, European qualifiers, a lot of, some friendlies as well, so yeah, worked my way up and loved every second of it, I'm not going to lie, that was probably, the whole Northern Ireland experience was probably my fondest memories, looking back, in football, as a whole.

BH: Nigel Worthington's team, there's a guy at my school who's Aaron Hughes.

JG: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, I know Aaron well. Well, I used to know Aaron.

BH: Was he in that squad, was he, yes?

JG: Yeah, he was the captain, yeah, yeah, a really nice guy. I think last time I bumped into him was in the middle of New York in a trainer shop [laughs], yeah, which was about 2013 maybe.

BH: Whenever you initially were approached by both Northern Ireland and the Republic, why did you choose the Republic over Northern Ireland initially?

JG: To be honest, it was, it wasn't, it wasn't, I always felt that it got portrayed in a way that looked like I'd picked them and it kind of wasn't, it was more of a I'll just go and see how each one of them is and go from there, and I'd also say United at the time, there was a few coaches that would have preferred me to have gone to the North and there was a few coaches that would have preferred me to have gone to the South, and it was sort of a just go on and see, and it just happened that the Republic came first, they invited me over first,

it wasn't like, it just, it wasn't, it wasn't a choice that was, obviously with your country it's not really, most people don't have to ever have this choice of which one do I go and play for, because obviously like, if you're English you go and play for England or if you're from Spain you go and play for Spain or whatever, however it is, but with obviously Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland they've got two different teams and it just, I could have played for either and I wasn't biased to either at the time, and it just like, for me it was both of them, it was like, playing for Ireland, which is where my heritage is from, and my dad's from one and my mum's from the other, and I didn't see it as, although I knew like, the history of it and I knew like, the differences of the two countries, it just didn't feel at sixteen years old as being as big [00:30:00] an issue as maybe other people had made it out to be, so again, I just went with the footballing reasons and when I went to Northern Ireland I loved it, so, and I never really looked back.

BH: You said you didn't really enjoy the few games and training that you did with the youth team in the Republic.

JG: Yeah.

BH: What were the other players like?

JG: Fine, but just, there was like, a few English lads like, the way it usually happens on those trips is that the English-based lads, who have sort of grown up in England with English accents, naturally sit together and the Irish lads stick together. The Irish lads at the time all knew each other, they'd all been playing against each other for local Irish teams, there was almost a sense of camaraderie there for them already, and there was a little bit of a divide. I sort of, I got on with, I tried to get on with as many people as I could, and don't get me wrong like, I still spoke to a lot of the lads who were Irish-based, but I roomed with someone who was from England, or lived in England or grew up in England I should say, and it just, it just, there was a little bit of a tear down the middle of the team and it just never felt right, whereas as soon as I went to the other side, although there is definitely still a slight divide, there was nowhere near as much of a divide like, I got on with players that were, I got on with everyone in that squad and I sat next to anyone at the dinner table, it wasn't a, it wasn't as big a problem, even though I don't think anyone saw it as a problem at the time it definitely was a problem within that team, there wasn't enough done to integrate and mix people up, and I'd probably say there was a little bit of resentment from the Irish-based lads who probably thought well, I might not get in the next squad because I'll get an English lad from a good academy instead of me, who's just at a local Irish team, so I think there was definitely a lot of that going on, whereas Northern Ireland it wasn't like that at all, it was, Desi Curry was the manager and he was very good at integrating everyone and making everyone feel welcome and a team.

BH: Cos there was a controversy about exactly that issue of course within the Southern Irish senior team in the press—

JG: Yeah, yeah.

BH: With Roy Keane making comments about second-generation Irish players and things like that.

JG: What did he say? I can't remember off the top of my head.

BH: There was a phrase that he used, but I can't remember what it was now, but I remember people that I know in Manchester who would be second-generation Southern Irish being really offended by it and really not very impressed with Roy Keane, like.

JG: Yeah, I think it's, I do remember, I can't remember exactly, like I say, but I do remember that. It was a few years back, wasn't it, and like, for me, I always found it that like, I had an Irish passport, I grew up in an Irish household, I just didn't have the accent and I'd lived in England, which is fine, but I always identified as being Irish and like, whereas I know there were lads on those, in those teams, both in the North and the South teams, who hadn't a clue about anything to do with Irish history, didn't have a clue about the Troubles, any recent history, any long hist-, like, longer history like the Famine, or the hunger I should say, and no id-, no concept of it, not even, not through their own fault, but just not interested in it, and there maybe for footballing reasons, that it might progress their career if they played for an international team, because that definitely does as a younger player, and there was some players who sort of like, no doubt about it, if England came calling they'd have been straight, gone, no doubts about it, and like, I've got like, lads who have played for Northern Ireland for years who support England openly, and I just, I never did, but I understand how, because they've just never been raised in an environment that, they'd been raised in an English environment where they'd always supported England, and it just, it just so happened that their grandma or grandad or someone in their family had some Irish background, and someone from the IFA or the Irish, Northern Irish FA had worked out that they did, cos I think they've got a lot of scouting systems where they work out these players, and if their parents or grandparents have got any heritage, and they probably don't even know themselves, and then they get a phone call to the club and over they come and they're just sort of like, oh well, I'll play for Northern Ireland, but I'm English, so I do get those frustrations like, I definitely understand it like, I've like, a close friend of mine is, would support England and is open about that, and then I've got another sort of English-based friend who supports Northern Ireland and doesn't really like England like, the same as me, he doesn't really have any time for it, so it just, I guess it depends on your background and how you were raised and what your parents' heritage is as well, and how they've brought you up. So I can see why someone like Roy Keane came out and said that, and I can see his frustrations, cos he probably thinks they don't care as much, they're not putting on the shirt because they want to, they're doing it for other reasons, but then there are definitely, more often than not there are definitely players there that do it because they want to be there or even make an effort to go and learn about it, even if they don't know enough about it at the time, they still make an effort to really get to know the country they're playing for or, yeah, so it is, it is a little bit unfair for sort of those comments, but I can see why it was, he probably got a bit frustrated with one or two lads that are probably just there for an international break and maybe to progress their career.

BH: Sure, yeah, I mean, you mentioned as well that the focus of your Irish holidays would have been Belfast.

JG: Yeah.

BH: And presumably that was because your own father would have been second generation, is that right?

JG: Yes, yeah.

BH: That meant presumably that your most immediate family would have been based in the North.

JG: Yes, yeah, definitely.

BH: Yeah, I wonder did that affect anything, either, as in your kind of familiarity with Northern Irish people?

JG: I, I think I definitely at the time, although it wasn't, it's not that big an issue, but at the time, sort of playing for Northern Ireland, it was then more the sort of my family and friends over there could identify with me more, if anything, that I played for Northern Ireland, so although like, they were fine with me playing for the Republic when I was fifteen, sixteen, there was definitely more of an interest and more of a keenness to know about it after I switched over to the North.

BH: Were they themselves interested in football?

JG: Yeah, yeah, I'd say so, not like, like, I'm just thinking of one of my aunties now who would make an effort to be interested, but like, it's not the be all and end all. Sorry, someone's just walked out on the road I'm looking at [laughs], sorry, I'm going to move away from there cos it's distracting me, yeah, sorry, what were we saying?

BH: Your family in Belfast, were they kind of, did they watch football, were they interested in it?

JG: Yeah, I think like, my grandad, he's passed away now, but he, he fortunately got to watch me in a few games over there, which was great. Obviously he found like, I'm sure he much preferred me playing for Northern Ireland than the Republic, even though I know it wasn't that big a deal for him either, but I just think there was probably, I guess so for myself it was an overall more of a sense of feeling more at home there because I'd gone over there a lot, I knew Belfast quite well, I'd been to Coleraine a lot, Portstewart, Portrush, so on. I, like, I didn't feel like I was faking it by playing for them, it felt very much like playing for my home country, whereas the Republic obviously that was more just the stories I'd heard from my dad and I hadn't actually ever been over to that side, other than when I'd first gone to play football, so I guess I, it was a lot more like playing for my country, although at the time it didn't feel like that when I first went over to the Republic, it just felt like I was going to play for one of the countries that I'm eligible for.

BH: Yeah, so you mentioned, you know, your grandfather there, and he was kind of a bit more excited about the fact that you had, you know, you'd taken up a position on the Northern Ireland team.

JG: Yeah.

BH: Obviously there's a politics about playing for the North or playing for the South.

JG: Yes.

BH: Which a lot of people would make quite a lot of.

JG: Of course.

BH: Was that something that you were aware of? Did you feel any sense of tension between the two parts [00:40:00] of Ireland?

JG: Definitely, in terms of, I was always aware of it and I knew it wasn't something that could be done lightly, and I think when I first went over to Northern Ireland I was a little bit nervous of that, that some of the players might feel like, oh I've gone and played for the Republic and so on, so I remember that being in my mind at the time, but overall it, what, me moving from one country to the other at sixteen years old really isn't, wasn't that big a deal for anyone like, it like, compared to the history of the countries and what's gone on and all of that like, it wouldn't have probably lasted in someone's mind for more than ten seconds, so like, the one thing I do remember is when I went over there were a few lads from sort of Derry who all had their Irish passports, I had an Irish passport and that sort of settled me a little bit to know that like, cos I had sort of an image in my head that everyone was going to be different, a little bit different, British passports and so on, whereas it was quite settling to know that that group was very inclusive of both religions, it wasn't a problem like, everyone integrated, so, and that I think was obviously it came from the management and they did very well in managing that and making sure there was no issues on that front.

BH: But of course again there was controversy there that there have been Northern Ireland senior players who have stopped playing for Northern Ireland, Neil Lennon for example, because of feelings of sectarianism and exclusion.

JG: Yeah, and it's a shame, it is a shame just because it's, if Neil Lennon's from Northern Ireland and wants to play for Northern Ireland and identifies as being Northern Irish it shouldn't be down to what religion, cos you get both religions in both countries, it's, it shouldn't just be, I think there's, I think if you were sort of English looking at it you'd go oh the North's full of Protestant people and the South's full of Catholic people, and it's a lot more like, nuanced than that, there's different areas and so on, so I think anything like that, like, I think the Neil Lennon thing was a few years before me and if anything that might have actually helped because to think then maybe people looked at that and thought we're making a big deal about this and it's actually stopping one of our better players playing for us, so maybe they then took it up themselves to really make sure and try and stamp out any

issues on that front. I'd imagine so, I could imagine, cos of how easy it was integrating, how, and not just myself, how obviously the lads from Derry and the lads from, say, Belfast, how easily they all integrated, and there was no trouble really between those two, and, as I say, I put that down to the management in all of that and how they dealt with it, so maybe the problems that happened with Neil Lennon were there and happened and that obviously they've learnt from that.

BH: Yeah, your memories then of going on holidays and things to Northern Ireland, I mean, your mother is from a Protestant background and her family I guess all would have been, you know, Protestants going to school, Protestant schools and so on in Northern Ireland.

JG: Yes.

BH: Was that ever an issue from what you recall whenever you went, when you went, returned home or returned back to Northern Ireland?

JG: Not really. I think, obviously my dad's background and family are Catholic, but again, never anything that wrong like, I, I guess like, myself I was never, I'd grown up in a household where it wasn't that big a deal because I had a parent, one parent who was Catholic, one parent who was Protestant, so obviously if they didn't see it as an issue and their views weren't entrenched in that train of thought of we are different, they obviously, that obviously rubbed off on me, so I never really took that on. To this day it doesn't really like, things like that don't really come into my mind whenever I meet someone. I don't think like, the first thing I don't think is oh where are you from, are you Catholic or are you Protestant, or even like, are you a Muslim or what's your ethnicity or whatever, it doesn't really, I try not live like, live my life like that, so, no, I don't think it really was that big a deal and it wasn't something that was discussed or made fun of or, obviously I was aware of it and I understood it, but I think we'd come out of the Troubles and all of that, I'd never gone over there, I don't think I was born or I would have been too young to even remember any of that stuff, so it was only, I only went over there in peace times as such, so no. But then like, I'd find things like, I'd walk like, where my parents, auntie and uncle live, and you'd walk past and you'd see all like, the murals on the wall, which I was fascinated by and things like that, like, the barracks that were nearby them, things like that I was quite interested in and so on, but no, nothing that, nothing really that big, I didn't really make, it was never really made that big a deal about.

BH: Sure, what I guess I wondering was just in that same way, you know, when you were growing up in Wilmslow and there were maybe times when the issue of Englishness and Irishness came up, as if like, you were kind of forced to pick a side to some extent—

JG: Yeah, yeah.

BH: Was, did that ever happen in the Northern Irish context? Were you forced to pick a side on something?

JG: Oh no, no, pfff, I don't, let, I'll have to think about this, nothing that springs to mind.

BH: Yeah.

JG: [pauses] Like, don't get me wrong, I have like, debates with friends like, a friend who, similar to me, his parents, well, one of his parents is Northern Irish, one of them's English, and he's got some views on it and he sort of, he leans to the Protestant side of things. We have some debates about that and, but all just debates and conversations, but nothing where I'd ever have to pick a side or so on, but I never really felt that there was, there was never like, a training session where they said oh Catholics on one side, Protestants to the right, it was never anything like that, there was no, there was no issues like, I get there was some people every now and again if they weren't picked in the team or there was like, an underlying bit of tension with, say, a manager or so on, they'd go for a bit of a like, a scapegoat or a way out and say oh he's only picking Protestant lads or he's only picking the Irish lads or he likes the English lads a bit more like, depending on which manager it was. Throughout my time like, there was a bit of that, but that I put that more down to people just looking for a way to ease the stress of not playing or try and find a reason out or a bit of rationale out of why they'd not been picked, but I never really felt like that was an issue, by and large.

BH: Did your parents encourage to kind of invest in your Irish background or your Northern Irish background?

JG: Yeah, I think, I think it's a str-, it's one of those, I think you can't sort of directly force it into people and I've seen that in people I've played football with, you can't force people to show an interest in their heritage and the history and so on, whereas like, my dad's very interested in it and he's passed a lot on to me, and I'd probably say out of all our siblings, so my sister, my two brothers, I'm probably the one that is most interested in stuff like that, and sort of I'll look at like, the sort of the Irish mythology and things like that and I'll watch loads of YouTube stuff and I'll sort of have times where when I'm not doing uni work or if I've got a bit of sort of like, something will spark my interest and then maybe for a couple of weeks I'll watch a lot on some Irish history or my dad will give me a book on some like, short stories or so on, so, and like, I'll do that for a couple weeks and I'll sort of further my knowledge and then maybe I'll have to go back to my uni work or do something else. But it's always something that I'm interested in and always open to learning more about because I, I'd probably say that, I'd probably say cos I've had the experience of playing for Northern Ireland I probably feel a little bit more comfortable or at home saying I'm Irish, whereas I can imagine people who haven't, who have always, who've grown up in England, who have had those sort of, say, even if their parents are Irish, but they've grown up in England with like, the school they've gone to, they probably identify more with being English, whereas I feel like I can validate myself a little bit more by saying no, actually I've got an Irish passport, I've played for Northern Ireland, so on and so forth, and that sort of, **[00:50:00]** when I'm having conversations with people it seems to sort of be a bit more of a, they then see me more as Irish than just someone who's just saying oh my grandma was Irish and so on. I've seen people get openly a bit like, oh there's another person who's said they've got an Irish grandparent cos, and it's a little bit of a cliché now, isn't it.

BH: That's really interesting, I mean, you, by actually playing for Northern Ireland, I think the word you used was validate.

JG: Yeah.

BH: That gives you a stronger claim to being Irish.

JG: Yeah, even though I don't like, I shouldn't have to like, if like, like, I've, my mum's from Northern Ireland, my dad's got Irish heritage like, you'll get like, I remember like, there'd be a lot of schoolteachers growing up and just sort of passing comments where people say well, you're not really Irish, are you, that would happen quite a lot, so whereas now like, I can openly say well, actually I am, I'll be like, I've played for them and I, that's sort of all the, all the validation you need to know from that, so you can't really play for a country and not be from there, so I guess it just, it just supports my claim of being Irish a little bit more than, say, I'd say like, my brother would, he'd still obviously say he's Irish and so on and he's got Irish background, but if he said that to somebody who he's having a conversation with they'd be saying oh well, you've always lived in England and you always like, you like, like, so what, you live in England and you've got like, you've got an English accent. Well, he can't turn round and say well, I played for my country, so I actually I am, if that makes sense.

BH: Yeah, it does. Back whenever before you played for Northern Ireland and when people would say, ask those, would say, you know, those comments like, but you're not really Irish, are you, was that difficult to respond to?

JG: Yeah, yeah, just you'd, it'd just be the, obviously looking back on it now it's probably people trying to wind me up, but at the time it was like, used to take, if I've got my Irish shirt on or if I'm purposely at my mate's house, not supporting England to wind them up, that'll be their way of coming back at me, so, or when England and Ireland play in the rugby, I even get that now like, I remember being at uni a coup-, like, and going and watching it with all my mates and someone would be like, well, you're not even Irish anyway, so why are you supporting them, and I'd be like, well, actually, so.

BH: [laughs] It's a strong card to play.

JG: Yeah, it is, and I thought, not many people, not many sort of people, second-generation people can say that, so yeah, yeah.

BH: What about then the English side of your background? Because obviously there is something in that idea that you have grown up in England for the most part. Do you think that has had an importance in shaping who you are?

JG: Yeah, oh definitely like, growing up in like, growing up in any country is going to form your identity and you can see the subtle differences in how we like, countries do things like, when I spend time, even when I spend time going to Dublin or go over to Belfast or even go for a weekend in London like, there's subtle difference all the time going on. So how would I say it's formed my identity, whoo, that's probably quite a, I probably don't even know the answer to that [pauses]. I'd have to think about it.

BH: Do you ever find yourself in a situation where there's a tension between your Irish and your English identity, where they're pulling in two different ways?

JG: Say that last bit again, sorry.

BH: Do you, have you ever found yourself in a situation where there's a tension between your English identity or the English part of your background and on the other hand your Irish identity?

JG: Yeah, nothing springs to mind directly, but I have, I do, let me think [pauses]. Sometimes with like, political things you can like, you can feel a little bit like, oh, with like, there's certain things you hear or like, you think or say like, there's times whenever I think oh I would have loved to have grown up in Northern Ireland, I remember we were quite close to living there, but then you hear of, like, like, a lot of my cousins have moved away from Northern Ireland for job prospects or opportunities and so on, so I guess, I guess I always probably knew that it was better for me to be growing up in Manchester than it was growing up in Belfast, just due to the fact that there was more opportunity here and a bit more going on, so I think like, in all honesty if somebody gave me the choice again where would you have rather grown up and I'd kind of gone back to age five, I'd have picked where I grew up all day long, just due to the fact of the opportunities and what's happened to a lot of my cousins, who have moved over or moved to Germany or other places or Australia and so on, which is quite common, so in that sense [pauses], I don't know if that's answering your question.

BH: It is actually, yeah, it's a really, really interesting insight, which is that you can have an emotional kind of attachment to the idea of Ireland and Irishness, but still have a practical awareness that actually to live and to achieve other things, you know, the, England is just a much more developed and practical space.

JG: Yeah, yeah, I guess that's, you've probably summarised it nicely there, that like, there's, I've got the emotional connection there, but yeah, practically I'm aware that it probably wouldn't be the best for future career to go and move over there.

BH: Yeah, what I haven't, I haven't really asked you anything about the Troubles. I mean, you mentioned of course that you're born in 1992, so really by the time you were becoming a teenager, you know, the Troubles, peace process had happened and so, you know, the worst years of the Troubles were over. All the same, was it something that you were aware of, the Troubles, did you know what it was?

JG: Sort of like, I think when you go and walk around Belfast and you like, I saw all the murals, I was like, growing up I was very interested in art, I thought I was probably going to be an artist if I didn't play football, so I saw these great big murals and was fascinated by them and obviously that sparked a lot of questioning on what they were about, so.

BH: Of course, yeah.

JG: Like, I was aware of it and obviously like, my mum had spoke to me sort of throughout the years about it and my dad a little bit and like, I'd sort of watched documentaries. I remember someone giving me a book on Johnny Adair that was quite eye-opening. I read, well, I think I read a hundred pages and decided it was probably a bit too much for me at about fourteen, so, but yeah, like, quite like, like, looking back, like, quite, the things that I liked or the documentaries I watched or anything that I read on it, obviously, I'm just glad that it wasn't going on in present-day times, put it that way.

BH: Yeah, did you ever encounter any reference to it in Manchester or during your sort of growing up in England, as against kind of the murals in Belfast?

JG: Not really, it was not, again, I don't think, sort of the Catholic-Protestant stuff was never really like, even I remember in school, there was a family who just, they went to a different church and there wasn't the whole like, oh you're different because you go to a different church, it's oh you just go to a different church, it is what it is, I remember that quite clearly because I remember how big a deal it was in Northern Ireland and then how little of a deal it was in Manchester that you could be from, you could have one section of the same religion and the other section of the same religion and they'd just be two different things within a, in the same religion, I don't know if I've described that well or not.

BH: Yeah, no, I know—

JG: You get what I mean?

BH: Yeah.

JG: Yeah, and it just wasn't that big a deal like, there was no, there was no negativity around it. [01:00:00] I remember actually, I don't know why this has come up, but I remember walking with the mother of those chil-, they were a family who were Catholics and chatting to her about it, I think we were on like, a school trip somewhere, and it just wasn't a, an issue, and that was in my primary school, and then in high school, if anything what happened in high school, what shifted was more the issues or problems for like, a lot of my Muslim friends who I became friends with and sort of the racism that they had growing up, that was more of a, on the forefront of everybody's minds there, not anything to do with sort of Catholics and Protestants, it just wasn't that big a deal, whereas there was a lot of issues and tensions around some of my friends who like, received some like, racial abuse and so on, yeah, and like, that, I'd probably say in the UK that's more of a problem, is those types of, that type of racism between sort of Muslims or black people and white people and so on, those tensions, so I guess, yeah, that would have been more my experiences in high school, growing up.

BH: Growing up in Wilmslow, I mean, I know, well, I'm not aware of like, an Irish centre or anything there.

JG: There's nothing like that.

BH: Nothing like that, no. Did your parents take you to or go to kind of the other Irish centres in Manchester or anything when you were growing up?

JG: It just cut out, but I'm just, did you say did my parents take me there?

BH: Did they ever take you, yeah, to like, any of the Irish clubs or Irish centres in Manchester?

JG: No, although my dad's a member and is quite heavily involved in it. For whatever reason I've not, I haven't lived in Manchester all that long, in, since sort of moving away at sixteen to Birmingham or Wolverhampton and then London and all over and then, no, I've never got round to doing that, not that I've ever really thought about it I guess, but I know my dad's quite big on it and does a lot there and my mum obviously does a lot with him as well with that, so, I guess probably, you've probably put it in the forefront of my mind to go and do that now actually.

BH: Well, that's just, it actually never even really occurred to me that I suppose your, you know, you lived in Wilmslow until you finished, you know, your GCSEs and then in fact you've been kind of moving around the place to play football.

JG: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BH: Which means I suppose you're moving with quite a kind of a relatively confined group of people, the people you play football with and so on.

JG: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'd say, go on.

BH: No, I was going to ask, was religion important when you were growing up? Did you go to church a lot? Was that part of the routine?

JG: My mum used to enforce going to church every two Sundays minimum, which used to infuriate me because it meant I missed rugby games every two weeks. I played football on a Saturday and rugby on a Sunday, and it used to infuriate me, so I did it and obviously my mum's Protestant, went to a Protestant church. My dad didn't really ever used to go apart from, say, maybe around Christmas or once in a blue moon. But as soon as sort football took over and like, I was, I signed for Man City or Man United, that was, that was it, I never really went again, yeah. Funnily enough I've done like, a little bit of work with some of the churches in that area when I had a job in Wilmslow for a couple of years when I moved back, but no, like, I wouldn't, I wouldn't—

BH: It wasn't an important thing, yeah.

JG: I wouldn't regard myself religious, I'm respectful of anyone who is and I don't see it as being an issue or I completely understand religion as to why people would have religion in their lives, so, and I'm aware of that, all that, but for myself no, I wouldn't say at the moment I am religious, so I, yeah, and I probably put that down to more when I was growing up I was more of a, I was more of a just wanting to play football and sport or rugby or

whatever it was at the time, so that was probably my main motive then, it wasn't like, I'm sure if I had nothing else to do I would have probably gone, but it just, it was something that got in the way of me playing sport, yeah.

BH: That actually surprises me, in that I didn't really pick up from your mum's kind of interview that she was really interested in the church at all.

JG: I don't know whether she, it's tailed off maybe.

BH: Yeah.

JG: I think I've probably, my, like, I, I probably have influenced her on that front and I'd probably say my other brothers have probably influenced her on that front, so she's not as big on it now as maybe she was ten years ago, and I think maybe, I think, the one thing I did always find like, and I did always wonder like, I understand like, Catholics and Protestants like, I understand the differences in them, but then I always used to, it used to amaze me that like, they were part of the same religion and they just had opposing views within that, and it did used to, I think that was probably one of whenever I started to question religion as being something that I wasn't a fan of, that was part of it, was I looked at sort of things like that and thought well, they're just, they're fighting with each other over something that doesn't need to be fought over like, religion should, if you're going to be religious it should be for positive reasons not for negative reasons, and I found that a source of reason to then say I don't really want to be religious because I've seen the detrimental impacts that's had on societies, not first hand, but just from obviously retrospective stories and looking at it from that view, so, and I'd, like, I'd say the same for most religions like, it like, when they're done in a positive way I am very supportive of them, and again, as I said before, anyone who is religious I am, absolutely no problem with, but when it starts being used for negative reasons I find that frustrating.

BH: That's really interesting, so it sounds kind of like, you and your brothers and sisters have kind of invoked the idea of Northern Ireland and its religious divisions as a way to kind of to justify not becoming involved in religions.

JG: Yeah, not like, I'd also like, I wouldn't, I'd put it down to, that would be a variable amongst things, but definitely a part of it, so obviously like, you look at the other things like, things we've grown up in later on, like the war on terror and things like that and like, the Muslim stuff, relig-, like, it like, first hand I've got friends who are like, who are Muslim and have been racially abused and I've always been a bit like, baffled by that like, my, like, there's no real difference here, it's just sort of a like, you've got a different religion, so what, or they've used or people have used religion to be, to make a, to sort of put people down and I've just, it's never really sat well with me when there's like, things like that, it almost puts labels on people unnecessarily and really we should all just be sort of viewing each other as, as one, but that's probably quite a romantic, romanticised way of looking at people in the world, but that is sort of the way I'd prefer it to be, is that we're all in it together type thing.

BH: And would you say that, you know, just referring to both those examples, Northern Ireland and more recently kind of conflicts with the police, would you say British society is more progressive in that respect?

JG: Pfff, good question [pauses], I don't know [laughs]. I'd probably say that obviously Irish culture is probably a little bit more fixed on, or Irish society is probably a little bit more fixed on the Catholics and Protestants stuff, and like all things like, some segments of those two countries will have been more bothered about it and some segments won't be bothered about it all, and it's the same in England and Britain like, some people are really bothered about certain things to do with different religions and some people couldn't care less and just see it as a division tactic or something to do with dividing people, so again, I don't, I don't know enough about it to say categorically oh this one's worse than the other or one coun-, or one society's worse than the other, but I'd say like, all [01:10:00] societies like, we all have our flaws and that's probably one of them, is that we divide ourselves on things that aren't really that important like, it's just a bit of a, to me it's always just, I've always been a bit, I've always found it unsettling that people can kill each other over things that they are quite similar on, just they've got a different way of viewing it, so.

BH: Yeah.

JG: Yeah.

BH: On that question of division then, were you interested in the Brexit debate?

JG: [laughs] Yeah, I, I, again, I, I, I, it's one of those, if I spent my time watching politics and the news I'd never have any time to get on with anything, so I do try and distance myself from that. My views on it were that I voted remain, I still would probably go with that. I think the issues around the border have been very interesting because you get, it's insightful actually because then you see how little some English or Welsh or, mainly English people I should say, they just don't understand the background of the countries and they just think oh well, a border would be easy to put there and it's like, no, it's really not, so I found that very interesting, it's almost shown how like, Westminster and the government there sort of like, I think they thought that whole process would be a lot easier in sorting that out and it really isn't, and I think it's, a lot of people have, the other side of it as well is a lot of people have gone and got Irish passports who perhaps never really even thought about their Irish heritage, have then gone actually now that maybe I need to get back in the European Union for one reason or another, maybe I should investigate my Irish heritage and go and get myself a passport, so I, like, I know people who have done that and have worked out, yes, I'm eligible and have gone and done it, and then even people from sort of Northern Ireland who probably thought I'll never not have a British passport have probably thought actually to suit my needs of self-interest then I'm probably better off getting an Irish passport now.

BH: Yeah, so did that debate around Brexit, did it make you think about your Irish identity more or was it something that was already part of your way of thinking about yourself?

JG: Say, it just, it just cut out again.

BH: Cut out again. Did that Brexit debate stimulate reflection upon Irish culture and identity for you or was that something that was already kind of part of the way you thought about yourself?

JG: No, not really. Brexit sort of, when was that, 2016 when it first sort of kicked off, I don't think the Irish side of things came more into it until they realised how complicated it would be a couple of years later, so, but I do find the lack of knowledge into the stuff regarding Northern Ireland and Ireland with Brexit quite fascinating, it's, people just, just have no concept of how big a deal that is, so if anything, no, I don't think it really makes me reflect more on it, if anything it probably makes me want to be less British, to be honest, so it's probably the, pushed me more towards identifying as Irish more than I would as British and I feel a lot of people probably feel the same cos it's, almost feels like oh if you, if you voted for, to leave and you want to sort of close up the borders and not be empathetic to people coming in and all the other issues that go on like, it almost feels like sort of a selfish thing to do, and not to be part of a European Union feels like a bit of a selfish thing to do, and if that's what the British public identifies with, as being a little bit selfish and a little bit self-interested like, doing things for self-interest and so on like, that makes me not really want to be part of that, so yeah.

BH: That's really interesting, so the effect of the Brexit debate for you to some extent is to sharpen your sense of identification with Ireland and Irishness?

JG: Yeah, I'd say so, it's definitely pushed me more along the scale, probably without even realising, but it's then like, when you hear some of the things that are being said and how people are like, like, sort of the reasons for why they voted to leave and you think well, I don't really want to identify with that as being part of my, like, as who I am, and unfortunately if you like, you meet people and you say oh where do you live, and you go you're British, and they think oh you voted for, what did you vote for and so on, and it comes up in conversation and it's just, it makes you like, think yeah, I'd rather identify as, it's definitely pushed me along that scale of wanting to identify more as Irish after Brexit, but again, I've not really even reflected on that, that's probably just something that's happened subconsciously over the last couple of years.

BH: Sure, yeah, just on that there, how would you describe your identity now, you know, is it English, is it Irish, Northern Irish or something different?

JG: Yeah, I'd never be English. I'd, I'd, I'm just trying to think how, whenever I've had to sort of discuss it, I'd be like, oh yeah, I'm Irish heritage, Irish passport. I tend not to go down the football route with people I don't know cos I can't really be bothered to speak about football half the time. That would only come up if I'm sort of, it comes up or I need to sort of validate myself a little bit more, but that rarely happens and like, I wouldn't, yeah, I wouldn't go shouting about it, but I'd definitely say I'm more along the lines of saying I'm Irish heritage and I'm proud of that, I'd rath-, I don't, if anything it makes me feel a bit anxious if I ever have to say I'm English, I'm not going to lie, yeah.

BH: What about—?

JG: I don't know why that, go on.

BH: Sorry, what were you going to say?

JG: I don't know why that is, but I just, yeah, I don't, I think maybe the years growing up of sort of my parents speaking to me about stuff and so on has made me sort of look on my Irish heritage with pride.

BH: Okay, what about the city of Manchester? Do you have any identification with that, as an area?

JG: Definitely, yeah. Although I've lived in Wilmslow, which is Cheshire, it's right on the border and I've spent a lot of time in Manchester and sort of grown up playing for both of the football teams—

BH: Of course, yeah.

JG: And like, a lot of like, spent like, spent, I've lot, spent a lot of time in Manchester and so on and like, I've moved in there very briefly, but it's my ho-, like, that would be my home city as such and like, if anyone ever asked me where are you from I'd say Manchester, so.

BH: So would you, if somebody said, would you be happy to take on the idea of being a Mancunian?

JG: Yeah.

BH: Yeah.

JG: Yeah.

BH: Yeah, which is different from being English, presumably.

JG: Definitely, a hundred per cent, and it's strange how some people don't, some people sort of don't understand that, but like, I've got a lot of friends who I've played football with who are from Liverpool and they kind of get it as well, cos they say well, no, we're not English like, we're Scousers like, that's what we are first and foremost, and I'd say quite a lot of people would be happy to say they're from Manchester, but not happy to say they're from England, and that is, when I meet people for, say, if I'm on holiday or like, we're meeting people, I'd say oh yeah, we're from, I'm from Manchester, yeah, it's probably, and everyone knows where Manchester is cos of the football clubs.

BH: Sure, yeah.

JG: So yeah, it's quite an easy one to say and it cuts out ever having to say I'm English, there you go.

BH: Yeah, that puts it well, yeah. In terms of the Irish part of the thing then, Northern Irish or just Irish?

JG: Just Irish, yeah, I don't, I don't have, I don't really have any strong views on it like, I just sort of see it as I guess I've got one parent from one place and one parent from the other and it's not, to me it's not that big a deal to say I'm from both or I'm from one or the other like, it, I'm just from Ireland, that's my heritage, it's all one big place, the same anyway, so, but I know obviously some people have very different views on that, but I just don't see that there should, I should put that divide in there, it just is what it is, and I guess I'm fortunate that I've got one parent from heritage of one place and one parent from the other place, so.

BH: What does that mean then, Irishness, what do you associate it with?

JG: What do I associate it with [extended pause].

BH: Some people, for example, I've recorded at [01:20:00] certain times have associated with, you know, I did an interview with somebody recently and it was all about alcohol and about drinking and stuff—

JG: Yeah, yeah.

BH: And I'm guessing that isn't a huge part of your lifestyle given the amount of—

JG: Not, not rea-, if anything like, I just think that's like, Guinness adverts and stuff like that that have done all that and like, if anything there's that connotation that I'm probably sure people like, I just know this from what my dad said, but like, connotation of like, all Irish people are dirty and all they do is drink and stuff like that, so although I know people see it as a positive now that Irish people can have a bit of a laugh and all of that like, there was negative connotations to all that like, like, years before. I think when the Guinness adverts and things like that came in and made it popular to be Irish and cool and drink and have a good time like, I get that, but I don't really, I don't really identify with that side of things. I was going to say more just like, the welcoming side of things like, and like, like, there's a little bit more empathy going on in Ireland and a bit more, a bit more, less of a, I don't know what the word, there's some-, there's like, a way I can summarise, there's like, in England, in England it's almost like, everyone's got to be doing something and it's, something's always got to be going on and like, there's no real time for reflection, whereas in Ireland like, the people are a little bit more relaxed and a little more easy-going and a little bit more friendlier and a bit more socially aware and emotionally aware, only like, very subtly, but I notice it from how I would say the, a year spent living in London compared to what I could imagine a year spent in Dublin would be like, I know they would be very different experiences, so that would probably be more, I would say would be, I can't even remember what the question was [laughs].

BH: No, what do you associate with Irishness?

JG: Yeah, that would be what I would associate with, definitely.

BH: Less, less kind of self-interested and driven by sort of careers and money and things, is that the idea?

JG: Yeah, yeah, more, more of a collectiveness and just like, you look back into the history of it like, things like, I don't know how true it is, but like, sort of I think it was the old Irish laws were where you could knock on someone's house and they'd have to give you a bed and food and so on like, you could never get that in English culture, whereas, and I know obviously modern day times that would never happen, but there's that sort of embedded welcoming culture and that I've found obviously, and you realise that the more times you spend over there and you go like, I went to Dublin just before Christmas with my girlfriend and like, she couldn't get her head round it, how different it was going to some places in the middle of Dublin compared to what it was like in England, so yeah.

BH: Listen Jerry, I've asked all my questions. Is there anything else you want to talk about, which you think's important, but that I haven't asked about?

JG: [pauses] I don't know. I'm, this'll be the classic where like, half an hour later my mind will switch on and I'll think of something [laughs], but no, not really. I guess, I guess, I think like, it's been great for me cos like, although I've loved talking about this obviously, I'm trying to do research myself on certain things and just seeing the process of how you've done it has been really valuable as well, so, but no, I can't think of anything else that I want to talk about, but as I say, it'll prob-, something will probably go off in my head in the near future, but no.

BH: I mean, it sounds like just kind of reflecting back over what we've been talking about that playing for Northern Ireland was a really big thing.

JG: Uh huh.

BH: It was an important thing obviously in terms of your development as a footballer.

JG: Yeah.

BH: But also something which was important for your identity and which connected you in quite a concrete way to Northern Ireland.

JG: Yes.

BH: It sounds like it's, that's the really important thing for you.

JG: Mmm, yeah, definitely. I think it's, it sort of cemented that feeling of not being second generation and being, no, I am actually just Northern Irish and here's my validation for it, so yeah, and I'd probably say that's, yeah, as discussed like, it's given me that sort of more of an emotional feeling towards the country as well. It'd be interesting to see like, how my brother would feel about it. I know my oldest brother who's sort of like, my half, he's half, but I don't count him as a half brother like, he's just my brother, but he's on my dad's side and he doesn't really have much of a, even though my dad would be more Irish, would be

more wanting to speak about Irish history and culture than my mum would, my brother doesn't really get that and like, he's interested in it and don't get me wrong like, I'm sure like, he finds parts of it really interesting, but he's not, it doesn't, it doesn't sort of, he doesn't go looking for that like I would, build on that and go and look into stuff and read stuff or ask for some books on whatever or watch some documentaries, whereas he'd just listen to my dad chat about it for a bit, but he, and he's obviously, he didn't used to go over as a kid or anything like that, so he doesn't really, he doesn't really know, I don't think he even identifies himself as English or like, I don't, I think he's just one of those where he just, he is like, he's not that fussed about all that stuff, and then like, my other brother, I'd say he probably would look at it more of the second generation, well, my parents are Irish, so I'm like, I've got a bit of Irish in me, but, and I'm sure loads of people would probably turn round to him and say oh you're not really Irish, but like, he's called Patrick, so that probably helps, and I know that sounds ridiculous, but English people, they see the name Patrick and think oh well, you must be Irish then, so that—

BH: Yeah, it's the most obvious one, yeah.

JG: Yeah, like, but he's not like, I don't think he would have those thoughts as much as maybe I would, but you never know, I'm not in his brain, but I don't think he, I don't think it's like, something he's as actively interested in as I am, maybe like, mine's a combination of probably the football side of things, being interested in what my dad's said and like, listening and growing up and so on, so, and I'm not like, I like history and things like that, I like knowing the history of places and so on, so maybe my personality's a little bit more inclined to being interested in it I guess.

BH: Yeah, and I guess your mum must have thought that too because, you know, she immediately, when I asked her she immediately said yeah, Jerry would be good to speak to.

JG: Yeah.

BH: So she straight away, that was her first instinct.

JG: Yeah, yeah, I guess so, yeah, yeah.

BH: Okay, listen Jerry, I'm going to go now, I've another interview in half an hour.

JG: Yes, yeah.

BH: Just want to say again thanks very much for doing this and for taking the time. It's been a really great interview and I'm really glad we made the time for it.

JG: Yeah.

BH: If you want to hear anything more about the project and what we're doing, drop me an email any time.

JG: Cool.

BH: And also we've got a website, there's not much on it yet, but eventually there will be stuff going up onto it.

JG: Brilliant.

BH: So yeah, if you want to, if you want to speak again about anything don't hesitate to get in touch.

JG: Cool, alright Barry, thank you.

BH: Okay, thanks very much, Jerry.

JG: Alright, take care.

BH: Take care now, bye bye.

JG: Bye now.

INTERVIEW ENDS