INTERVIEW M21: DAVID STONE

Interviewee: David Stone [pseudonym]
Interviewer: Dr Barry Hazley
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Location: Virtual
Transcriber: Naomi Wells

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

BH: Okay, so that's us recording now. Okay, so it's the thirtieth of October 2020, it's just come up to after three o'clock there and I'm here with David Stone about to do an interview for the Conflict, Memory and Migration project. Before I begin, can I just say David, thanks very much for agreeing to do the interview and thanks for taking the time to take part. I know people are busy and I know people especially on Fridays probably have other things they want to be doing, so I really appreciate you taking the time to do it.

DS: You're very welcome.

BH: So, as I said to you, this is a life history style of interview, and the first question I always begin with is when and where were you born?

DS: Okay, I was born in 1960, in June of 1960, and I was born in Dungannon, but my hometown was Castlecaulfield, which is a small village about four miles from Dungannon.

BH: And what did your parents do?

DS: My parents, my mum was a housewife, my dad had different jobs. He was a foreman in the linen factory in Castlecaulfield, but then he became a, he was made redundant and he became a part-time, a full-time traffic warden in Dungannon, but he was also in the RUC reserves as well.

BH: I would take it that was the very last kind of embers of the linen industry at that stage.

DS: Yeah, it was great, it was really good because the factory was not too far from the house and we used to walk down because the, what do you call the, the horn it was called, the factory horn would go off and we would go down and meet him at dinnertime or we'd go down and meet him at teatime when we were children and that was really good, and all the factory people came up out of the factory together, so it was really, it was a really positive and warm memory, I would describe it as.

BH: A foreman was I suppose quite a good job at that stage in the factory.

DS: Yeah, well, my grandad he was a manager in it and then when he retired dad was made up to like, manager, foreman in it, but dad worked there for all, most of his life as such up until he was about, I think he was about thirty-five, thirty-six, and then he was made redundant then.

BH: So I suppose in your family then that factory would have been quite important, with your grandfather having been a manager in it and then your dad.

DS: Yeah, it was, it was really important and not only that, because we lived in Castlecaulfield the majority of people came from the village that worked in it or they, because there was what was known as the factory bottoms and those were little terraced houses that factory owners were in. We didn't live in those, we lived in a council house further up the road and grandad, he was given a manager, foreman's house beside the factory, but yeah, it has really positive memories.

BH: What happened then, whenever the factory shut down, that housing that was built for the workers, what happened to that?

DS: They were allowed to live there and eventually what happened was they were rehoused because they were small, they were really small, it was like, two up, two down, and then there were terraces, rows of terrace houses with an outside toilet to it and all the rest, so what happened was they were demolished after a period of time. We used to play in them as children once the families had moved out and all the rest of it, but they were replaced by I think it was about four or six houses, you know, semi-detached houses, so, and there was a play park beside it as well, which we all went down to play at as well, which was nice.

BH: And what kind of a place then was Castlecaulfield, whenever you were living there?

DS: It was a small village. I think it had about, this was in early 1960s, I was born 1960, it had I think about five hundred of a population, it was very rural, if they weren't farmers people worked in the factory, some people worked in Dungannon, which was the nearest town, large town. There was two churches in it, a Presbyterian church and a Church of Ireland church, the Catholic church was further down the road, three mile down the road and that was in a place called Donaghmore, but it was a mixed community, it was both Protestant and Catholic.

BH: And how was it in terms then of kind of intercommunal relations? Was there signs of tension when you were growing up or was it more placid than that?

DS: I can never remember signs of tensions in Castlecaulfield, but it was around, around that area like, Dungannon, and round that area was always known as the murder triangle, as growing up, but in Castlecaulfield we never had, I never felt there was any tensions, we had Catholic friends, we had Protestant friends growing up and all the rest of it, so I never, it wasn't ever an issue as part of growing up, maybe later on when we were at, when we went to Dungannon, we went to, I went to a Protestant school in Dungannon, but it was a

secondary school, but after that I went to Dungannon Technical College which was mixed, both Protestant and Catholic.

BH: Dungannon's obviously also famous for the origins of the civil rights movement, some of the housing protests originated in and around Dungannon. I guess you would have been very young at that stage probably, six or seven, maybe not even that age.

DS: I don't recall much of that anyway, and as a family I would say we were very apolitical, we didn't really get involved with politics as such in that respect, and I don't know why that was cos my grandparents came from Belfast from the East Street direction, which is a Protestant area, and my mum's side they came from Katesbridge, which is a farming community, so we never really got involved with politics as a child growing up.

BH: Would there have been an Orange Order and things like that in Castlecaulfield when you were growing up?

DS: Yes, there was an Orange hall and there would, you would have the Orange parade coming through and at that time you did go to the Twelfth of Julys, but you went there because it was just mixing with other people and it was fun, and I never seen it as a political thing, I just seen it as like a parade, if you understand rather than anything other than that. As a family we weren't in the Orange Order or the Black Order or anything like that, we didn't and we weren't part of the, Castlecaulfield did have an accordion band, but we weren't part of that.

BH: Yeah, when your, when did your father have to change jobs then and become a traffic warden in Dungannon?

DS: He was the first traffic warden, don't know whether that's an accolade or not, but he was the first traffic warden for Dungannon and I think that was around '73 about I think, around the early seventies anyway, yeah, yeah, cos he had his photograph taken and it was in the *Tyrone Courier*, you know, with him having to pretend to put a ticket on a car down Scotch Street in Dungannon [laughs].

BH: And what did he think about that, as in, obviously he had quite a good job in the linen factory and then this is quite a new career, quite a new line of work for him?

DS: Because there was, I have two brothers and two sisters, I'm the second youngest, and mum didn't work, well, she was a childminder, but she wasn't, anybody could do childminding back in those days, so dad worked all the hours God sent, so he had a really good work ethic and he instilled that work ethic in all of us because we were working from **[00:10:00]** when we were thirteen like, a Saturday job and things like that, so the traffic warden job was great, but he had to do other jobs on top of that in order to try to, what do you call, keep the family clothed and watered and stuff like that, because we were, how would you say it, oh I don't know the terminology to describe it, but at school, primary school we got free school meals and things like that as well, yeah, so.

BH: Yes, so what about school then? Did you like school?

DS: School was okay. I went to Walker Memorial primary school, which is still there. We had a head, a master, and all I remember him asking me to do was to go down and get him cigarettes, down at the local shop, down the hill from the school. I like, I liked school, yes, I didn't have a bad time at school, and then I went from there, I failed my eleven-plus, I went to Carland Road secondary school and then from there I went to Dungannon Technical College.

BH: That school that you went to, is that still there now? I don't recognise the name.

DS: It's called a different name, it's down, is it called, it's still there, it's the big, big school, there's a, I forget what the name of the road, it must the Carland Road that takes you up past Tyrone hospital, Tyrone–

BH: Oh yes, I know where you mean, yeah, yeah.

DS: Yeah, from Cookstown up to, into Dungannon, it was on that road.

BH: Yes, near where the hospital is or used to be anyway.

DS: Yeah, but it's still there, it's still there, but it's got a different name and I don't know what the new name of it is.

BH: And what was that like? Because obviously you're feeding in from a, I suppose a rural village into I suppose a larger town, and you're mixing I suppose with other people from the Dungannon area in school.

DS: It was really good, I really enjoyed it, I had really some nice friends. We got the free bus in, we had a bus driver who used to collect us and children from all around the area like, from Cookstown as well, from Dungannon, from Benburb, all around local areas, so each of us, I mean, each area would have its own allocated bus and bus driver, so it was good, it was enjoyable, school was enjoyable.

BH: And you mentioned there that you had Saturday jobs and things like that. Did you have, what did you do for like, leisure or for outside of school and outside of work, did you do anything else?

DS: Outside work I was a member of the Boys' Brigade.

BH: Oh yeah.

DS: Sorry, sorry, not outside work, outside school [laughs] I was a member of the Boys' Brigade in Castlecaulfield and we also played badminton and stuff like that, and then in the summertime we would go and help farmers and stuff like that, you know, potato picking and things like that and stuff like that.

BH: So you done, you would have done quite a lot of work then alongside of the schooling then.

DS: Yeah, especially, yeah, even at primary school when we were older in primary school we'd go, you know, collecting potatoes and stuff like that in the summertime to make a bit of money, but my dad got me a job in a shop, a shoe shop, which was called Eastwards shoe shop in Dungannon on Scotch Street, where I sold shoes, and I got two pound a day for that [laughs], but that was when I was thirteen, so that'll be back in 1973, no, it wasn't two pound a day, it was fifty, it was ten shillings, that's what it was back then I'm nearly sure, but when I worked a full week I got a lot more money.

BH: And what was it like, Dungannon in nineteen seventy, did you say 1973?

DS: Yeah, what we would do is, we'd have to get the bus in, which was from Castlecaulfield which is about four mile away, or you would thumb a lift or sometimes dad would have the car and we could get in with him. Dungannon was, it was a mixed area in relation to religion and that, because Eastwoods was a Catholic, owned by a Catholic family and the people in it were Catholic families as well. Dungannon at that time didn't have an awful lot going for it, but the job that I had I loved it, it was good. Because we lived in Castlecaulfield, there was only one pub in Castlecaulfield, we never ever went to the pub and things like that, we would go out and we would play as children and all the rest of it, we would never be in a pub really.

BH: Why was that? Was that because too many people that you would know would be in it or what or–?

DS: No, because it never interested us as a family, as children and stuff like that, and the other children that we were playing with, even older children, we wouldn't go into a pub, anything like that. One thing I do remember about the pub, it had a fox, a fox always in the pub called Basil, you used to go and visit Basil the fox because it was a real novelty, so, but, but anyway, I don't know whether that's relevant or not [laughs], but it was Tenner's pub and it was really, no, it wasn't called Tenner's, I can't, it was, Wells' pub, sorry, but yeah, it was good. Sorry, you asked me about Dungannon–

BH: Yeah, I suppose what I'm getting at there is as, was–

DS: It was, it could be a hostile place in relation to the Troubles though and that was the disadvantage because even though we were working, I was working at the bottom of Scotch Street and the army were around all the time, because they were based up at the very top in Dungannon, they were based up at the top of the square, there was an army barracks up there, the army people would sometimes run in and say get to the back of the shop or you need to get out, and the next thing bomb, the bomb would go off, you know, and you became so blasé about it and all the rest of it, it just became, you became immune to it, it was just one of those things, and afterwards you might've walked past where the bomb was or the where the bomb was defused and things like that, so you just became blasé about it. I remember one time we were going to go to a badminton match and it was in Dungannon and we were going through Donaghmore, which is the village, and we went over a small

river, and over the bridge of a small river, the road went over the bridge, or sorry, over the river, and the next thing coming towards us was the police and the fire service and the next thing bang, and we weren't too far away from the bridge, it was a, like, a mortar bomb that had gone off on the bridge, so, but then because you were so immune it didn't, it didn't really affect you as such, it was just part of life, if you understood.

BH: Yeah, you know the way you said when you were growing up in Castlecaulfield you had Catholic friends and things like that, did that change when the Troubles came about or did you still have Catholic friends and people that you knew?

DS: The way we were brought up from dad and mum, we always had to respect other people, you know, so it didn't cause us a problem, no, I would say not. You would see the person as a friend before you would see them as a religion, if you understood.

BH: Yeah, and what did your parents think about, you know, sort of the emergence of this, you know, the Troubles, the army arriving and bombs going off? I mean, it must have been quite a change in people's lives.

DS: Well, dad was also in the army when he was younger, I don't really remem-, well, I remember going up to the army bank, barracks in Dungannon for Christmas parties and I remember Santa coming in a helicopter before now, you know, but we used to have some of the army men that were from England or wherever, dad would bring them home for Christmas and they would have Christmas dinner with us and stuff like that like, one or two would come out of the barracks **[00:20:00]** so that they could have family Christmas, if you understand, and I remember that, and I remember, because we lived in a small council estate which is only, I think it had twenty houses to it, and we had fields at the back of it, it wasn't unusual for the helicopter to land at the back of the field and then the army men, a couple, you know, because they knew us, would come up from, up the field and come in and stuff like that, but that was a very rare occurrence, you know, but it sticks in my mind at least twice where the helicopter would land and, you know, a couple of them would, had, come up to the house and stuff like that, yeah.

BH: Did you, you mentioned earlier on as well, in order to make ends meet your dad was in the RUC reserve, is that right?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: Was he in the B-Specials before that?

DS: No, he was, no, no, no.

BH: Would that not have been a dangerous thing to do, to be a member of the RUC reserve?

DS: It was dangerous, yeah, because dad was killed in the Troubles. He was shot by the IRA in the Troubles, in 1976, but at the time he was in his traffic warden, he was doing his traffic warden duties, and it was the third of December 1976. He was showing children across the road at the chapel in Dungannon, I think it's called Northland Road, and they came up

behind him while he was showing children across the road and shot him in the back and he died there, so.

BH: And was that targeting because he was a member of the reserve?

DS: Yeah, because he was in the RUC reserve, it wasn't because he was a traffic warden.

BH: Yeah, yeah, that must have been a major event in your life.

DS: It was because I remember the day it happened, he had said to, he had said to, just leave mum in bed, don't disturb mum because she can have a sleep in. I was at school, which the school was just down the road from the chapel. A young Catholic fella came in, I remember his name distinctly, I remember it happen, came into class late, we were doing English literature at the time, and he came in and he said oh, he said oh somebody's got shot down at the chapel, but they probably deserve it, and I remember that distinctly and I remember him saying that, and I walked out of the class and the school, the English teacher came out after me and he says what's the matter, what's the matter, and I says that's my dad, and he says it's not your dad, it can't be your dad, so he says go back into school, go back into the class, and he went up to the headmaster, the principal of the technical college and he told him and the next thing they, the principal come down and says can, he pulled me out of class basically and he says it is your dad, I'm going to take you home. At that stage I didn't know he had died and I was the first at home and mum was still in bed, so I had to tell her, I was sixteen at the time, so, so I told her and then the church, I'm Presbyterian, the Church of Ireland minister came to the house and I opened the door to him and he says I'm really sorry to hear about your dad's death, and that's the first I knew he'd died, and I had to tell mum, so, which was difficult at the time, but you just have to get on with it, it was just like, the third of December, so it was Christmas and Christmases, dad always made our Christmases, mum would support Christmas and all the rest of it, but dad was the person who made Christmas happen, so.

BH: It would have been a hard Christmas that year.

DS: It was a hard Christmas, yeah, but the thing that I have to say, the people that turned out for his funeral was phenomenal, because there was a thousand people who turned out, and they were Catholic and they were Protestant. The priest from Donaghmore had come over to us and all the rest of it, you know, we didn't feel as if, you know, it was just one-sided, if you understand, the whole community supported us, if, if that's the right word.

BH: Yeah, sometimes when that happens to people, afterwards they, their anger leads them into politics or it leads them to want to take vengeance.

DS: Yeah, I can understand that, and the way I dealt with, the way I dealt with it, I can only speak for how I dealt with it, was that dad had to die from something, okay, it could have been cancer, it could have been something and all the rest of it, and unfortunately he died due to an accident, however you want to describe it. Otherwise I would have become very bitter and I didn't want to be that person because otherwise that would've just grounded me down or grounded the family down, and we're all like that, we just think well, you know,

not that we love dad any less and all the rest of it, it was just that we had to be able to deal with it in our own way.

BH: Sure, were you at the technical college at that stage?

DS: Yeah, I was studying engineering at that stage and me and engineering doesn't work [laughs], but that's what I was doing at the time, so I went, I did my O-levels, I only got four, I started A-levels and I just thought this isn't for me, so I left, I applied for the police and was acce-, passed my police exams to become a cadet, but mum had said to me, do you really want to be a cadet and go into the police, and I says what are you saying mum, and she says I would prefer you not to go in, I can't go through this again, so I didn't, I withdrew from it, so I didn't go into the police.

BH: To be honest, that was going to be my next question. Were you not, would you not have been apprehensive about joining the police?

DS: No, because my sister, she was in the reserves, and dad had always instilled in us that we had to do something that would benefit the community and things like that, so, and it was a natural progression only from the point of view, I didn't, I really didn't want to do engineering, I didn't know what I wanted to do, I thought I would make, I could make a policeman [laughs], rightly or wrongly, and that's the career I had chosen and I went to Garnerville for the entrants' exam, passed that and got a high mark and I was accepted into that. I had applied for a job in Moygashel to work in the factory there as a trainee accountant, but I didn't get the, I wasn't successful, so I thought I need to do something, so yeah, so that's, but then when mum said no, you can't do that or I'd prefer you not to do that, I don't want to go through it again, I says I can't put my mum through that, so I didn't.

BH: So what were you going to do then, having ruled that out?

DS: I applied for nursing and I was accepted to do my psychiatric nursing.

BH: Ah right.

DS: But then mum, we had moved from Castlecaulfield to Dungannon, and then mum decided she wanted to move to Bangor, because we always went to Bangor for holidays, and that was in 1978, '79, so my, one brother was at university, my one sister and my younger brother stayed in Castlecaulfield with my grandparents, my other, my sister was married, so I decided I would go to Bangor with mum because it was difficult for her just to go down there on her own, so I got a job as a hospital porter at Newtownards Hospital for twelve months, which I really loved, but I decided that this wasn't a career for me, I couldn't do this all my life even though I loved it, so I reapplied back to nursing and was accepted, so I went to Purdysburn Hospital and did my psychic nursing there.

BH: Right, okay, so that's quite a lot of stuff happened then in the space of a few years. That's a big move as well for your mother, moving **[00:30:00]** all the way from Castlecaulfield over to Bangor, and again, just you and her moving as well.

DS: Well, mum and dad, at the weekends, mum and dad, sometimes my sister would look after us like, we were grown up, well, we were in our teens and all the rest of it, mum and dad sometimes would go and work in Bangor, it was a hotel and shop called Pollocks in Gray's Hill in Bangor, so at the weekends they would go down there and work as well. They worked all the hours God sends, you know, in order to keep the family fed and watered if, so basically, so she already had friends in Bangor, if you understand, and as children we used to go to Bangor because my grandparents had a holiday home there, so we would go down to Bangor, so Bangor was, we had really fond memories of Bangor, I love Bangor even now, you know.

BH: Yeah.

DS: Yeah.

BH: Did that, does that imply then that she'd had enough of Castlecaulfield, your mother?

DS: Yes, it did imply that. I think she just wanted to break away from it because even though she worked in the picture house in Castlecaulfield after, sorry, in Dungannon after dad had died and all the rest of it, and she had a lady who worked with her who was a Catholic and they were great friends and all the rest of it, and they were really good to one another, she'd, it was just too much for her, so she wanted to move away from the area, and rightly so.

BH: Yeah, and was it the right move, as it turned out?

DS: It was for her, it was for me, my brother and sister living with my grandparents maybe thought differently because I suppose they really wanted to be, we all wanted to be as a family unit, and my brother was at Queen's and my other sister, she was living in Portadown, so it didn't have an impact on them, but I admire mum for being determined to do what she wanted to do, and that was good.

BH: Yeah, so you at the same time as this then began I suppose your career as a psychiatric nurse.

DS: Yeah, I felt that that was really enjoyable and that was for three years. I worked in Purdysburn after qualifying for another year and a half as a staff nurse. I had applied at that stage for promotion for a charge nurse's post and I didn't get it, even though I was only qualified eighteen months I didn't get it, and the charge, the nursing officer came to me and says well, you didn't get the job obviously, but there'll be other jobs'll come up, and I just thought to myself well, no, I'm not waiting for dead men's shoes, I could be here as a staff nurse for a long time, so then that's when I left Ireland to go to England, or to the North of Ireland, left the North of Ireland to go to England.

BH: Right, okay, so my question there would be what was kind of the motivation for that, but it sounds like it was career advancement.

DS: It was career advancement because working in Purdysburn, as much as I loved Purdysburn, you could see people who worked there for years and years and years and didn't get anywhere, and I just thought to myself it was like being a hospital porter, I couldn't do that for years, if I stayed at Purdysburn I would probably be waiting for dead men's shoes to get promoted or I would just become institutionalised like the patients and I didn't want that either, so that's the reason why I decided to apply for a job in England.

BH: Did your, what did your mother think about that, whenever you decided you were going to move to England?

DS: She understood. Her dad, my grandad, was upset with me, he says you need to look after mum, your mother, and I says no, I have to look after me. My brothers and sisters are still around, I'll be able to come home and all the rest of it, it's not that far away, and I says I'm going to go, so, and I did.

BH: Yeah, and did your mother stay in Bangor then?

DS: She lived in Bangor, yeah, yeah, up until she died in 2013.

BH: Okay, and when you went then over to England did your brothers and sisters then play a bigger part in coming to see her and so on?

DS: Oh yeah, we are a close family, yeah, so, not as close as some families, but we are a close family and like, we speak to one and another on a weekly basis, fortnightly basis and stuff like that, but yeah, our mum was independent, mum had her job in the shop, in Pollocks' shop and stuff like that, so, and she just got on with it.

BH: Yeah, she was able to rebuild her life in Bangor, make friends and–

DS: Yes, yeah, yeah, and she, yeah, she was able to do all that, so, and her friends were lasting friends, if you understand.

BH: Sure, did she retain connections with Castlecaulfield? Did she go back to see people?

DS: There was families that lived close, next door to us and stuff like that, she wouldn't, mum couldn't drive, so if she went back I would be taking her back and stuff like that, and I would go back from the point of view of interest, because I still loved Castlecaulfield as well. Granda had died six months after dad was, had died, he died of a broken heart because of what happened to dad, and then granny, she had moved away from the area as well, cos that house that was part of the factory, they had bought and all the rest of it, it was too big of a house for them to look after, for her to look after, and she wanted to go and live somewhere where she was close to family as well.

BH: Right, where did she go then?

DS: She went to Lisburn and, because her younger daughter lived down there, so she went down there, but then she came back to Dungannon and she was in a nursing home in Dungannon and died in the nursing home, in Dungannon.

BH: So whenever you decided then that you were going to move over to England, was there a particular reason why you chose where you went to or was there other options open to you? Could you have went somewhere else?

DS: The reason why I went over to Manchester was because I had a friend who qualified with me at the same time and she was in Manchester and she'd moved over about nine months earlier and I thought well, at least I know somebody there. London didn't appeal to me, so I went to live in Prestwich, which is north Manchester, and my friend she lived in south Manchester.

BH: Right, so was that an important thing then, the idea that you'd be going over with somebody else, that you would know somebody?

DS: No, I went over on my own, but it was nice to know that there was somebody there as much as to give her support likewise, but, and we've remained friends ever since, that's Peter's mum.

BH: Yeah, yes, yeah, yeah, and what were your impressions of Manchester then? What kind of place did you think it was?

DS: It was just a city to me, it was nice, nice doesn't really describe it, it was just a built-up area, coming from Dungannon or Bangor or Castlecaulfield [laughs], it was a big, it was a big place, but the place I went to work in, which was Prestwich Hospital, I went to work in a regional drug unit, which I didn't have much experience of drug dependency, but I thought well, this'll give me a focus and all the rest of it, so I stayed in the nursing home on site and then eventually got accommodation off-site, and then I bought a house in Prestwich then after that.

BH: Right, and Prestwich, I mean, there's an Irish, there was an Irish community in Prestwich, wasn't there?

DS: Yeah, Crumpsall's more the Irish community, which is just down from Prestwich, yeah, there is, and there was a lot of Irish people in the, that worked at **[00:40:00]** Prestwich as well, or Irish descent, but I didn't know anybody in Prestwich, I just picked up, at the time it was the *Nursing Times*, I looked through for jobs and I seen this one at the regional drug dependency unit and I thought that sounds interesting, I need to move on [laughs]. I applied for it, they wanted me to take a charge nurse's post, but I thought I don't want a charge nurse's post because I haven't got the expertise around drug or drug misuse, so I took the staff nurse's post there and was very happy with that.

BH: Right, so actually you ended up, you did take a staff nurse position then?

DS: Yeah.

BH: Yeah, and did you eventually then apply for a charge nurse position?

DS: They encouraged me to apply for a charge nurse's post, but, I sound as if I'm a bit of a, what you call it, a bee or a butterfly jumping from one area to another area [laughs], again, I decided that I can't do psychiatric nursing for all my life, so I was lucky and I was accepted to do my nurse training, my registered nurse training at Hope Hospital and that was eighteen months and I worked there, qualified there and that was great, and then I worked on the coronary care unit, I don't know whether this is relevant, but I'll tell you anyway, and then from there what I did was I went down to London for six months to do a specialised nursing course in coronary care and then came back and then worked in Crumpsall Hospital, and the reason for coming forward and back was because I had this house in Prestwich that I had bought, and then I worked in Prestwich for a period of time in coronary care, intensive care nursing, and from there then, I enjoyed the job, but I didn't feel that the job was for me, so from there I went back to London and did my health visitor training and then came back from there, back to Manchester again after eighteen months because I had my house, and I had became a health visitor in central Manchester looking after a GP practice, looking after the Travelling community, and then I became a health visitor for TB and domestic violence abuse.

BH: Right, when you first came over to Manchester, and even over the course of the whole time that you lived in England, how did you find English people?

DS: I found them really friendly. I, I, they were very, because they knew I had come over on my own and all the rest of it and that I lived in the nursing home, the people in the nursing home were really, really good as well, in as much as they socialised with you, we went out together and stuff like that, and people, older people would, you know, take me to their homes and stuff like that, and I remember there was this Spanish couple who were really, really good to me as well, and they were nurses in the hospital as well, so there was a lot of support from colleagues and stuff like that. I found the first six months very difficult, and my sister had said to me just come home and get a job and I said no, I have to stick it out, I have to stick it out, and after that six-month period, you know, I was happy enough. I never thought I would never come back to Ireland.

BH: Yeah, those first six months which you found difficult, was that homesickness?

DS: It was, yeah, yeah, that's how I'd describe it as homesickness really, yeah, even though Laura, my friend who I trained with, was down in south Manchester, she was living in a shared house as, you know, down there, it was just the thought of being away from home.

BH: Sure.

DS: Yeah, I was never part of the Irish community in Crumpsall, because there is an Irish centre in Crumpsall, I never really went to that and stuff like that.

BH: Well, I was going to ask you about that, you know, did you know other Irish or Northern Irish people in the city of Manchester and did you spend much time with them?

DS: Not, not really, no. My friends would've been English or Scottish or from different, there was nobody that I would say was totally Northern Irish apart from Laura.

BH: Yeah, I mean, was there any particular reason why you didn't gravitate towards kind of the pre-existing Irish community in Manchester?

DS: Oh this sounds awful, but I had all these preconceived ideas and, that the Irish community was a very political community in the Irish centre in Manchester, and from that point of view I stayed away from it because I didn't want to get involved, if you understand.

BH: Yeah.

DS: So that's the reason why I didn't, never went to the Irish centre.

BH: I think Laura actually told a story about a trip to one of the Irish centres in Manchester and there was a, collection buckets going round for the IRA and things like that.

DS: Yeah, for paramilitary organisations, and that just would not, I would prefer to just ignore that, don't get into that or don't go there and that's why I never got involved with the Irish community.

BH: Sure, what about English people then? How did they perceive the Troubles? Did you find that any of your English friends talked about the Troubles?

DS: Yeah, they would ask you what was it like growing up and things like that. Some people knew about dad because I told them, but I, it wasn't something that I wore on my sleeve, if you understood, you know, if I trusted people and stuff like that or if they were really inquisitive about the Troubles and things like that and they tried to relate, get it, get me to relate to it through conversation for them, I would try to do that. Sometimes they'd just ask like, have you been, have you ever been directly affected by the Troubles, but on the majority of occasions I would just say it's just part of growing up and all the rest of it, but occasionally I would mention about dad.

BH: Yeah, and how do you, do you think English people understood what was going on in Northern Ireland or they, did they, were they, you know, were they interested in general in it?

DS: I think the only time they were interested was after the Manchester bombing and stuff–

BH: Oh of course, yeah.

DS: And stuff like that, yeah, and things like that, I remember that day, but I think people respected you, people thought well, you don't, he doesn't really want to talk about the Troubles, he's lived through the Troubles and all the rest of it, you know, and I don't know whether I did, subconsciously maybe, make them feel that, you know, you can ask a little bit, but I would change the subject [laughs] or something like that, you know, it's a long time

ago and it was never a dominant thing between my friends and the Troubles, you know, as a piece of conversation, it never was a dominant area of conversation.

BH: Did you ever encounter any hostility or anything like that as a result of your accent?

DS: No.

BH: No.

DS: No, people used to love the accent, and I don't know why I never lost my accent, maybe that's the reason, subconsciously, because people used to say I really like your accent, because my cousin who had moved over a year beforehand–

BH: Oh yeah.

DS: Who'd gone to Dudley, he ended up with a Brummie accent and I thought I don't want an accent [indecipherable; laughs], so I don't know whether that was conscious or subconscious, I don't know [laughs].

BH: It's funny how that happens sometimes, it does happen in some cases and not in others, it's hard to know why. When you had moved over there, did you continue to kind of follow events in Northern Ireland? Did you continue to follow the Troubles on TV and so on?

DS: Only if it was on, only if it was on, it was part of the news, it wasn't that I would go out seeking Northern Irish news or anything like that, if it was part of the news or if it was an area that **[00:50:00]** I knew about or stuff like that or things like that I would look into it a little bit more, but back then Barry, you're probably an awful lot younger than me, but back then you didn't have access to all the social networks and things like that. It was on the news and if you heard it on the news that was fine, if you didn't hear it on the news, well, you only accessed it through newspapers, you can go, couldn't go onto the internet and stuff like that, so, and that made maybe was a positive thing at the time.

BH: I suppose that's what I was going to ask you next as well, I mean, would you have preferred to not really have spent a lot of time thinking about it? In other words, did, was moving to England also about not being, not having to think about that too much?

DS: No, my prime reason for moving was career pathway rather than getting away from Troubles and all the rest of it, because my family still lived in the Troubles and I was still part of the Troubles through my family, if you understand, you know, because they were living through that, so directly or indirectly it still had an impact on me, and especially around Castlecaulfield because there was loads of people that I would've known that had died or had been killed in the Troubles and stuff like that, even people that I went to school with and things like that as well, you know, so [pauses], I actually [pauses], I don't, sorry, I've lost my train of thought, but Ireland, going to England was more from the point of view of looking after me in relation to my career as opposed to getting away from Ireland.

BH: Those friends and relatives that you still had back in Northern Ireland and around Castlecaulfield, would you be worried about them? Was it something you worried about?

DS: You would be worried about them, in as much as if, if their names came up and all the rest of it in relation to townlands and stuff like that, you would think goodness, you know, are those people okay and stuff like that, but it didn't dominate my day-to-day living, if you understood, understand, it was just part of, I acknowledge it's still going on, I didn't see there was going to be a resolve to it, it just didn't seem to be going anywhere, and you would think well, I'm glad I'm over here rather than being over there, but it wasn't the sole reason for coming over to England.

BH: Sure, what did you think about, for example, those groups that were based in England, particularly in the seventies and eighties, like Troops Out, and even there was another group formed of kind of the relatives of British soldiers, called Bring Our Boys Back from Ulster, and basically these were people campaigning for Britain to pull out of Northern Ireland essentially, making the case that, you know, it has got nothing to do with Britain, did you ever encounter any of these kind of protestors or groups?

DS: No, I didn't, to be honest with you, and I didn't actively go looking for them either, that type of thing wouldn't, again, going back to dad, dad brought us up in a way that we have to respect people, but don't get involved with affiliations or anything like that, you know, and you seen people as a person, as an individual, you wouldn't see them as an organisation or a group of people that believe in this and all the rest of it, that was never dad's intention, he brought us up just to, you know, to respect people, who they are rather than who they, where they're coming from or not stuff like that, and if they didn't do you any harm then they were okay.

BH: Yeah, what about outside of work then? So there's your career within nursing. What did you do outside of that in England? What did you do for fun?

DS: [laughs] Rusholme was great, we went down there on a weekly basis, at the curry houses.

BH: Oh yeah.

DS: The Shezan, we used to go there on a weekly basis, meet up with Laura and all the rest of it. Other things, I tried scuba diving and stuff like that, I tried, which didn't, it didn't appeal to me at all. I love the cinema, so we went to the cinema, we went to the theatre and stuff like that, so there was always plenty to do and stuff like that, and I had friends that, you know, we'd go to parties and things like that, so I didn't feel as if I missed out on anything, I think I had a nice social life when I went over to England.

BH: What about pubs and things like that? You weren't very interested in that?

DS: Because we were never in the pub culture in Castlecaulfield or at home, I would go if other people were going, but I would never think oh God, I need a pint and stuff like that, even in Prestwich Hospital, they had a social club and it wouldn't be, I would go if somebody

asked me to go, but I wouldn't think oh I'll go and meet people there, if you understand, I mean, go for a drink and if I meet somebody there that's fine. I would go if somebody invited me to go, otherwise I wouldn't go.

BH: Yeah, what about the church then? I never asked you were you, you know, did you, you know, did you go to church whenever you were younger back in Castlecaulfield? Was that an important part of your upbringing or not?

DS: It was more an important part of dad's up-, the philosophy that you always had to go to church, even though you mightn't have wanted to go to church, so we always went to Sunday school and we always went to church, and if dad was working and knew that you didn't go to church he wouldn't be happy [laughs], and when you were growing up there was a thing called, halfway through church, there was a thing called children's church, where the children left the church and went over to the church hall and played games and things like that, and sometimes we would just come home, and again, dad would never be happy, so church was important to dad, and we did, I did an awful lot around the church in Castlecaulfield, in as much as we had jumble sales and we would org-, there was a few of us would organise these things and all the rest of it when we got older and things like that and had great times, but church [pauses], as a religion I'm a Christian, as a person I believe in God, but I'm not one of these people that go to church in order to speak to God.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

DS: Does that make sense?

BH: It does, yeah, yeah.

DS: Yeah, so church doesn't play an important part in my life, in as much as if I want to speak to God I speak to God, and I've been brought up as a Presbyterian and I will die as a Presbyterian [laughs], I don't intend to change to anywhere else or anything else, maybe I'm lazy or maybe I'm just happy with what I've got and what's been given to me.

BH: Sure, so it wasn't this thing where when you moved over to Manchester you kind of started to search around for like, a local church kind of thing?

DS: No, no, that wouldn't appeal to me at all.

BH: Yeah, yeah, so those, there's quite a bit of moving backwards and forwards between Manchester and London, it sounds like [pauses]. Hello? Helloo? Hello? [extended pause] Hello? [laughs].

DS: Barry, I don't know what's happened, hopefully–

BH: I think it must've just lost connection for a minute.

DS: Yeah, is that okay?

BH: As far as I know, I, let me just check to make sure we're still recording, I think we are, it's fifty-nine minutes [pauses], yeah, everything seems fine as far as I can see now. Don't worry if that happens again, that, sometimes that, it must just be a connection goes, but you must have been able to get back easy enough there.

DS: I went back to the, to your email, I went through that process quickly again.

BH: Yeah, okay, just make sure that [pauses], I just want to make sure that this recording is the same one as the one we were on, in case we start talking now and then **[01:00:00**] I'm not recording the right one, so connected [pauses], okay, no, that's all fine, okay, I think what I was asking about there was that there was quite a bit of moving backwards and forwards between London and Manchester, and I just wondered what did you think of London I suppose, whenever you moved down there?

DS: I liked London at the time, it was great and all the rest of it, but I didn't really want to live in it. It was really good, it was enjoyable, the thing is though I think I had some nice friends down in London and I stayed with some friends down there, but it wasn't a place that I would like to have lived in.

BH: Yeah, yeah, and you had bought a house in Prestwich anyway.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

BH: The cost of houses must have been relatively cheap back then I'm guessing.

DS: I bought the house, when was it, I can't remember when it was, but it was it was a two up two down terraced house in Prestwich, it cost me eighteen and a half thousand and I was able to get a hundred per cent mortgage at the time [laughs].

BH: Oh right [laughs].

DS: [laughs] That was really good as well, so I landed on my feet at the time.

BH: Even now, today, to get a, you know, a two up, two down terraced house in Prestwich is probably, you know, not that easy to do, you know, it would probably cost a lot more, like.

DS: Yeah, it would definitely cost more, I think even the house that I left, it was on the market, it was about ninety-three thousand the last time I seen it, so a lot. So when I was down in London what happened my brother came over from Ireland, from the North of Ireland, he was a phar-, he is a pharmacist and he rented, well, he looked after, stayed at the house and paid my mortgage, so I could pay my living accommodation down in London and stuff.

BH: Yeah, and at this stage then had you kind of decided in your mind that you were going to stay in England or stay in Manchester or, you know, did you, how often did you return home?

DS: I usually went home maybe once a year, once to twice a year, but I encouraged mum to come over as well, so, so and my older sister, she would come over to England a lot to go on holidays and she would come and stay with me as a halfway between Northern Ireland and going down to Torquay or going down to the south of England and stuff like that, so.

BH: Sure, and what was it like when you went back, that once a year, was that for a holiday kind of thing?

DS: Yeah, and I always was able to fit in, no problem at all. It was just a bit strange going through security checks and things like that, but, you know, you adapt really quickly because it's just part of, this sounds stupid, but it was part of your DNA really.

BH: Sure, yeah.

DS: And you just thought well, this is what happens here, and when you went over to England you would never think oh England's free, you would never think that way, oh I'm free, you would just think well, this is England, this is the North or Ireland.

BH: Yeah, and where did you go to? Would you have went to Bangor or would you have went to Castlecaulfield?

DS: Bangor, to stay with mum, but then I would take her out and visit and stuff like that, so we'd be down in Castlecaulfield, we'd be with rellies, relatives and stuff like that as well, so yeah.

BH: And what was that like, going back to Dungannon and Castlecaulfield?

DS: At the beginning it was nice, it was good and all the rest of it, going back to Ire-, to visiting at the beginning, at the very beginning it was a wrench to come back to England cos I kept thinking oh I really could stay here, but I thought no, I've made the move, keep going with it.

BH: So it kind of, it reactivated that feeling of homesickness then whenever you went back.

DS: On many occasions, yeah, yeah, and from that point of view I thought no, I can't see myself working back in Purdysburn Hospital or similar, I just have to keep moving.

BH: Yeah, so really then, even though you might have felt like that when you came back on holidays that you wanted to stay, you'd no intention of coming back permanently or anything like that really, like.

DS: No, I never ever thought I would move back to Ireland, never, even though I have moved back to Donegal now. My intentions was if I, when I retired I'll go to north Wales or Wales, but never to Ireland.

BH: Yeah, how did that come about then, moving back to Donegal?

DS: Well, mum had died in 2013, 2014, she'd left me, she'd left us all a little bit of money and I had some savings, so I had bought a holiday house with my partner in Donegal and we kept coming over every year or couple, a few times a year, so we thought well, it's nicer to come back home and we didn't have that journey of going back and forward across the water, even if we had moved to Wales, it's a real inconvenience going and driving the whole way up to Donegal, so I just thought will we move back home again.

BH: And why in particular Donegal? Obviously Donegal's a very nice place, but why not somewhere within the Six Counties I suppose?

DS: We've friends in Donegal, we had met, we had friends that we'd met in London and stuff like that and we've always stayed friends, and they were from Donegal and they moved back to Donegal, so if, we kept that up. I would have liked to have lived in the North, but my partner likes Donegal, so we decided to stay here, especially cos we've got the house.

BH: Is your partner fr-, are they, do they have a connection with Donegal?

DS: Through friends, through work friends, yeah.

BH: Through work friends, when did you meet your partner then? Is this a long term partner or–?

DS: Yeah, it's a same-sex partner, we met in [pauses] 1987.

BH: Ah right, so that was a good few years after you'd moved to Manchester.

DS: It was about two and a half years after I'd moved to Manchester, yeah.

BH: And you've been together that long?

DS: Yeah [laughs].

BH: That's a long time.

DS: [laughs] It's too long, no, I don't think I've, yeah, yeah.

BH: That's really interesting, did Manchester have a gay scene at that time?

DS: It did have a gay scene, but I didn't come over because of a gay scene or anything like that, that [pauses], how to put this [laughs], at the time when I was living in Belfast and working in Prestwich, Purdysburn I was going out with a girl, who was a Catholic girl, and we were going to get engaged, but we decided not to, and I decided as long, I would also, you know, I'm coming over to England now, that broke up, so I'm coming over to England, but my sole purpose of coming to England was promotion, it wasn't anything to do with anything else, and then two and a half years later I met my partner, who is also a nurse, in,

we were doing agency nursing together, so, and we struck up a relationship then and we've been together since.

BH: Right, so that, before you left then you were engaged or you were almost engaged to–

DS: No, we were considering engagement, yeah.

BH: Considering engagement, so that was quite a serious relationship?

DS: It was a serious relationship, and I never looked at my sexuality back then, it wasn't an issue and anything else, but obviously things worked out differently, and obviously I'm in a civil partnership since 2006, yeah.

BH: And what happened with that, the relationship in, with the girl in Belfast? It sounded like it was serious then. Why did it not work out?

DS: Their family thought I was a bit of a pillock, if that's the right word to use, they were a Catholic family and he was very much [pauses], **[01:10:00]** how do I describe him, he was a very strong-willed individual, if, her mum was lovely and all the rest of it, but him and I didn't see eye to eye, but we got on with one another and I would help him, he had a smallholding and I would help him and all the rest of it, but when I was helping him I didn't do it the way he wanted to do it, the example I'm giving is dipping sheep, sheep dipping, you know, and he would normally do it on his own and I would go out and give him a hand because I thought, give him a hand, okay, and stuff like that, and he used to complain and I'd just say to him oh just, sheep, dip your, dip your own sheep or whatever [laughs], you know, we didn't really get on, and then it just fizzled out basically, I was going with her for about two and a half years.

BH: Right, that's quite a long time as well, two and a half years.

DS: Yeah.

BH: So he, she was from a farming background it sounds like then.

DS: Well, no, he wasn't, he was a, he was a, he worked for the council in Derry doing roads, but he had like, a smallholding and he had sheep and stuff like that, so.

BH: Right, right, so then when you moved to Manchester then and two years later you met your future long-term partner, obviously something had happened in terms of how you saw your sexuality.

DS: Yeah, well, I must have always been either bisexual or gay, I don't know, I really don't know, but anyway it's, maybe I'm lazy, I don't know [laughs], but I met in with my partner and happy with the partnership and all the rest of it and it's worked and we're still together, after this time.

BH: And did you let your mother and your relatives back in Northern Ireland know about your partner?

DS: Yeah, yeah, because he would come over on holidays with me and stuff like that, yeah.

BH: And how did they react to that?

DS: Mum was tearful for about two minutes and then she says, I says well, mum, it's better I love somebody rather than be on my own, she says well, that's true, so she says fair enough and that was it. My s-, what do you call it, I've got a sister who's a born-again Christian and she finds it difficult, but she's accepted more recently, you know, but it's never caused a problem, it was never discussed, if you understood.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

DS: Yeah.

BH: Because I suppose there's always the perception that Northern Ireland as a culture can be quite illiberal and it can be quite narrow-minded about lots of things. I don't know whether that's true or not, but, you know, from your experience do you think it was?

DS: Oh definitely it was, there's no two ways about it, but again [pauses], I don't know, this probably sounds not right, I, if people spoke to me, I've been told, nobody would know I was gay, if that was the case in relation to my mannerisms or whatever, behaviour and stuff like that, okay, so, what am I trying to say, in as much as that's, I don't know what, I've lost my train of thought, I apologise.

BH: No, it's alright, take your time, there's no rush.

DS: In, in relation to being gay in Ireland I think it would be very difficult, in relation to gay in Ireland now I think it's totally changed. I think if somebody says to me, you know, are you married, I would say no, I'm not married, but I'm in a civil partnership, which means a same-sex partnership, I don't have any hang-ups in saying that because I think it's, you know, it's not my problem, it would be their problem if they couldn't accept it, but again, I wouldn't be rude to them and I wouldn't be thinking, you know, you're not listening to what I'm trying to say, that type of thing or whatever, you know, so being in a relationship's more important, whether it's a same-sex relationship or heterosexual relationship, it's being in the relationship's the most important thing to me.

BH: Yeah, what about Manchester itself then? I mean, obviously Manchester now has a, you know, you know, a large gay scene and so on and nobody really thinks twice about it, but was it like that back in the eighties?

DS: It was very different back in the eighties. Manchester gay scene is very, now it's very mixed, in as much it's very hip for people to go, that sounds really awful, but, you know, for people to go, straight people to go into Canal Street and all the rest of it, that's fine, okay, but back in the eighties it was, you know, you would never go over there, to Canal Street

because that's where the gays are and stuff like that, so everything has moved on at a tremendous rate, and it's moved on to the benefit of everybody, whether you're, whether you're gay or whether you're straight or whether you're bisexual or trans or whatever, it's moved on in a positive way I think.

BH: What about your partner then? Is he English or where's he from?

DS: He wouldn't like me to say it, but he's from Stoke-on-Trent [laughs].

BH: [laughs] What's wrong with Stoke-on-Trent?

DS: He thinks it's the last place before hell, but [laughs] anyway, it's not that bad of a place, no, it's, sorry.

BH: No, go on ahead, what were you going to say?

DS: No, I think his perception of Manc-, of Stoke-on-Trent is very individualised to him.

BH: Yeah.

DS: Yeah, everybody wouldn't agree to that comment.

BH: Yeah, and what did he make of your background, growing up in Castlecaulfield and everything that had happened in your life? Was he aware of the Troubles himself, as a thing, like?

DS: Well, he would have been aware of the Troubles, but he came over to Ireland shortly after we met, so we met in, he must have been over in Ireland in the late eighties, he'd come over, and he can see a vast difference because he remembers the, what do you call it, the security checks and all the rest of it and things like that, yeah, so, but he knows about, well, he's just part of the family really, so he knows everything that everybody else knows in the family.

BH: Sure, and did he have a political view about the Troubles, you know, did he have a view about unionism or nationalism or the role of the British state or anything like that? Or is that not something he was interested in?

DS: Now he has a view, yeah, yeah, and he would be in favour of a united Ireland, and he thinks it's colonialism that has caused problems, obviously which it has, but he can trace his lineage back to 1066, so, but a part of, what do you call it, the burgesses, which is a famous thing in Stoke-on-Trent and all the rest of it, so, you know, so I keep saying to him well, you're part of, that's in your DNA, so don't be coming over here and [laughs] all the rest of it, but anyway, yeah.

BH: So it sounds like actually his views underwent some kind of evolution then while you've been together.

DS: Yes, but he, he likes Irish history and stuff like that, he likes history and stuff like that, so he will read an awful lot. In relation to Irish politics, I just don't get involved, even though from my mum's side they would be unionists and they would be in the Orange Order and all the rest of it, from my dad's side he was apolitical and that's the way I would be. I would never vote unionist, I would either vote Alliance or SDLP, and if there was a vote for a united Ireland and I thought it was the best for the country I would vote for a united Ireland.

BH: Sure, what about in Donegal then? Cos obviously the elections you can vote in are elections for the Irish government.

DS: I have, we haven't gone that way yet at the minute, so we haven't voted for anything at the minute, we need to probably register and stuff like that, so yeah.

BH: That move then to Donegal, are you glad you made that move?

DS: Yeah, but to be honest with you, I think I was going to say this earlier on, **[01:20:00]** you asked about the Six Counties, would you not like to live there–

BH: You live there, yeah.

DS: I would've loved to have moved to the Ards peninsula, around that area, but I'm retired now, I retired when I was fifty-eight, I'm sixty now, I'd done my forty years for the health service and I thought I want out, so, and he's still working, so, and he works in the North but he lives in the South.

BH: And is he, does he work in the NHS as well?

DS: Yes, yeah.

BH: Obviously there is no NHS in the thirty-two counties.

DS: No, it's the HSE there, Health and Social Executive or something.

BH: Yeah.

DS: My only concern about living in Donegal is the healthcare system is different and it's different in a way that I don't agree with, cos I do voluntary work now in the hospital, in the local hospital, so I've got some insight into what happens in the hospitals and healthcare. I work in cancer care, so I think, I would prefer the health service that's the NHS as opposed to the HSE.

BH: Yeah, although at the moment it doesn't seem to be going too well in Northern Ireland, the health service at the moment.

DS: No, no, it doesn't, but I still think I'd like to live in the, in the Ards peninsula [laughs].

BH: In the Ards peninsula. What part of Donegal are you in? I mean, are you close to kind of Tyrone border or are you more towards the coast?

DS: I'm more towards the coast. I don't know if you know Donegal, I live towards Portsalon, so the beach is just a mile away.

BH: Oh lovely, yeah, really nice.

DS: So yeah, and the mountain, the mountain view's fantastic, Knockalla mountain and stuff like that, so yeah.

BH: Yeah, I take it from that then you don't miss Manchester.

DS: I wasn't living in Manchester for a long time, even though I worked in Manchester I lived in west Yorkshire in a place called Hebden Bridge.

BH: Oh I know it, yeah, I know it.

DS: Yeah, I lived there. Todmorden and then Hebden Bridge.

BH: Oh yeah, it's very nice, nice wee place.

DS: Yeah, so, so I don't miss it really, I'm glad we've made the move and my partner's always of the opinion that if the Apocalypse happens we're more prepared for it living in Donegal [laughs] than we would be living in Manchester, if Armageddon happens.

BH: Yeah, I mean, I think I've asked most of my particular questions, so what I'll do now is ask some very general broad question, just as you get towards the end of the interview, and these are just really kind of questions designed to, you know, provoke reflection over the whole kind of a life course as a whole. So do you think, what do you think has been the impact of the Troubles on your life?

DS: It has, it had a severe impact when dad died and we've had to adapt to that, and more recently because of the historical enquiries and stuff like that, we had to take part, I took part in that.

BH: Oh right, yeah.

DS: And they've done a report on dad and dad's death and all the rest of it, which is very in-depth, and that brings back memories and stuff like that and it, it doesn't bring back hostility or anything like that, it just brings back, you know, dad shouldn't have died the way he died, he was helping the community, it was cowardism in relation to those that killed him, they didn't give him an opportunity, but I still think he's died, there's nothing I can do, that was his way of dying, I have to accept it.

BH: Was that process of being involved in the enquiry, was that a good thing?

DS: It was good from the point of view that I knew stuff that my, me and my brother went, our, some of the other family members didn't want to go, one of the questions was if the person who killed your dad was still alive would you want to have a conversation with them and all the rest of it, as part of reconciliation. I would have liked that discussion, my sister especially would have liked that discussion, only from the point of view of trying to understand the reason behind it, because when you kill a family or kill a person, no matter who that person is, but if you kill a person who's got a young family, and kill them near Christmas, knowing that they have to live with that and all the rest of it, we're seeing it through a different set of eyes than they would see it through a political set of eyes, but dad never had a political bone in his body, dad wanted to provide for his family and these were the opportunities that he had to take in order to do that, so he went to work in the army, he went to work in the linen factory, he went to work as a traffic warden, he went to work as a, what do you call it, RUC reservist, yeah. I am so proud of my dad and my mum and I would say that I couldn't have any better parents, and that's the thing.

BH: Yeah, in relation to all of that then, your dad's death and the impact that had, not just on you but I suppose your family as a whole, was there any relationship between that and your life in England?

DS: In what way?

BH: I suppose you've already said it didn't really, it wasn't the cause of it, you didn't leave to go to England because of that, but I wondered did maybe England, did it create a kind of a space from which to reflect upon it or process it or digest it, or was that not relevant at all?

DS: I don't think it was relevant. I just thought that I had to get on with my life and try to do the best I could, because I did the best I could really, because at the end of it I ended up as a consultant, a non-medical consultant in the health service, in public health, so I would be dealing with stuff, I was dealing with stuff such as Covid and things like that, so I was dealing with going to strategic meetings and all different things like that and all the rest of it. I just wanted an, I'm not a selfish person, but I just needed to plan my life in such a way that, you know, I wanted to make my dad proud and my mum proud and all the rest of it, and that meant an awful lot to me, you know, because, like I say, I left school with four O-levels [laughs], I started my A-levels, but I went on and on and on and I did my deg-, this, I did my diplomas and my nurse qualifications and my masters and all the rest of it, so I worked really hard just to prove to myself that, you know, I haven't let myself down or I haven't let my family down.

BH: Yeah, and you didn't think that it would have been possible to do those things in Northern Ireland?

DS: Definitely not, no way, no way. I would still be working in Purdysburn Hospital, no criticism to people who are working there, and no criticism to Purdysburn Hospital, because the NHS has given me a career and has always looked after me and I admire those people, but it wasn't for me to work in psychiatric nursing all my life, I just couldn't cope with it, I, you know, this is probably a very apolitical statement, but our training was three years and it's, the first year we had, as I said, in the first year this, and I'm saying this is apolitical, you

laugh at them, second year they laugh at you and the third year you all laugh together, and I thought I don't want to become institutionalised, I don't want to do this for the rest of my life.

BH: Yeah, was the psychiatric nursing particularly difficult?

DS: It was more custodial care, to be honest with you, at the time, I loved it and I worked in the male lock ward an awful lot, I had lovely friends, I had really good colleagues and all the rest of it, **[01:30:00]** I enjoyed it, but I just had to move on.

BH: Yeah.

DS: Yeah, it could be difficult, yeah, but enjoyable, enjoyable.

BH: The next obvious question which follows from that then is really, looking back, are you glad that you made that move, that you left Northern Ireland at that time?

DS: Yeah, I definitely, definitely, I'm glad I left it. On reflection, maybe London would have offered me a lot more, but Manchester, if somebody says to me what would be your favourite city in England I would definitely say Manchester always, over any other city, and I would associate myself more with Manchester than any other part of England, if you understand.

BH: Sure, yeah.

DS: It was a good choice.

BH: And where does meeting your partner fit in to this story? Because that's quite a, it's quite a big thing, you know, given that you had, you know, previously been almost engaged to a girl, that sounds like it was a significant development in your life.

DS: It's good that we've got commonality, in that we're both from the health service. The thing is though he wanted to advance his career in nursing as well, which he has done. He went down and lived in London while we had a long-distance relationship for times, in order that we didn't stop one another from doing what we wanted to do, so we've taken opportunities as they've come along, so it's worked out well.

BH: Do you think you've changed since moving to England all those years ago?

DS: Yeah, definitely. I would say I would have been, I wouldn't have the confidence back then that I have now. I think of the things that I've done, and especially in relation to work and stuff like that, and how I've held my own and things like that. Recently, well, a few years ago somebody tried to bully me at work and I just took it by the horns and dealt with it, through the le-, through the what you call, the HR channels and all the rest of it, and I just think no, I'm not an aggressive person, I'm not, you know, a person that's out for myself, but if somebody treats me wrong I will stand up for myself.

BH: So you've become more assertive?

DS: Assertive, confident, all those different things, yeah.

BH: Yeah, and is that through working in the NHS?

DS: It's through different experience, life experience, through working in the NHS, and I think that I wouldn't have got that in Northern Ireland, I really don't, you know. Some people have got great opportunities in Northern Ireland, I don't believe that the career that I've taken in Northern Ireland I would have been, wouldn't have the same opportunities as I did, from moving away from the North.

BH: Yeah, do you think if you had have stayed in Northern Ireland it would have been possible to come out as gay or to meet a same-sex partner?

DS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's not an issue for me, it might have been more difficult and all the rest of it, but I'm happy in a same-sex relationship. I think I was gay, well, obviously being with the person I'm with thirty-four years, what am I trying to say, it has worked out well for me and I've got no regrets.

BH: What does home mean to you now, or where is home?

DS: Home is in Donegal. Home would be nice if it was in the Ards peninsula [laughs], but I'm very, I'm very lucky, in as much as I'm back in Ireland and that's good because I thought I would never want to come back, you know, and I thought England or living in the mainland was everything and all the rest of it, but coming back it's, it's, I'm happy to be back home again. I've lost a lot of friends over the period of time because of being away and stuff like that, but that's part of, that doesn't mean because you're from Northern Ireland or anything else you would do, you could do that anywhere, no matter where you are, even if you're in Northern Ireland you could lose your friends and stuff like that.

BH: Yeah, what do you mean lose them? You mean you lost touch or–?

DS: Lost contact, yeah, lost contact.

BH: Lost contact. Do you still think about Castlecaulfield?

DS: I always go when I'm passing. I would always go to see mum and dad up at the grave and put stuff, you know, even if it's just a, what do you call it, even if I'm driving past and I see the signpost I'll always say hello mum and dad and stuff like that. I know it's a bit stupid and all the rest of it, but Castlecaulfield, I'm very proud of Castlecaulfield, I'd say.

BH: Yeah, I don't think it's stupid at all.

DS: Thank you [laughs], thanks.

BH: I think I've asked most of my questions. The final thing I always say is, is there anything I haven't asked about which you think's important and that we should be talking about?

DS: No, I don't think so because I hope that I've been able to give you some insight and some information in relation to me and why I went away and why I've come back and all the rest of it, so I'm hoping that that's going to be useful.

BH: It's definitely going to be useful, yeah, it definitely is.

DS: So I don't know whether if you wanted me to do is ask my brother does he want to take part in it because the only thing is he has stayed in England, he would never come back. He thinks Ireland's too parochial, and I don't know whether you'd get a different dimension or a different–

BH: I think that would be fantastic. Where is your brother based at in England?

DS: He lives in Prestwich, he lives in Simister, he lives.

BH: Ah right, so he lives in the Manchester area as well.

DS: Yeah, because he bought, he, like I say, he came to rent my house out or to take over the mortgage for my house at the time, and then he liked it so much that he's always stayed in Prestwich area.

BH: If you could ask him that would be great, yeah.

DS: Right, okay. His name's Alistair, but I will drop you an email one way or another to see whether he would want to do it or not.

BH: Of course, yeah, you sound him out and see, maybe he doesn't want to do it, you know, but if he's interested I would definitely be interested in interviewing him, like.

DS: And it might be, you know, from the point of view, well, I'll let him talk to you and let him put his point of view across because there are some similarities and all the rest of it, because what I'm trying to say to you is he's also gay.

BH: Yeah, yeah.

DS: I don't know whether he came over because of relationship prob-, relationships or whether he come over because of job opportunities, mine was job opportunities, the relationship developed after that, I don't know whether he would say differently or whatever.

BH: Well, I would, that makes me even more interested to speak to him because, you know, as part of the kind of the sample group for the project, you know, we want to have as many different kind of experiences as possible, so yeah, speaking to your brother would be a priority I would say, if he's interested.

DS: Yeah, I don't know whether you have had siblings before that have come on to this or not, but yeah, I'll ask him and I'll let you know one way or the other whether he wants to take part in it.

BH: No problem. Listen David, unless you've anything, any other stories or memories that you want to discuss, that's my questioning done.

DS: No, that's lovely that's, it's been really nice to talk about it because you never really do that, do you, in such in-depth, it's always snippets and stuff like that and you do it with family and all the rest of it, but at least you've drawn stuff out and things, which is really positive.

BH: I really hope you got something out of it. It's definitely a fantastic interview and when you do these interviews you never really know what kind of a story you're going to get, but that was a fantastic interview I think.

DS: Oh that's good, that's really helpful, good Barry, I'm pleased I'm able to help, **[01:40:00]** so thank you.

BH: Okay, just one final thing, if you want to find out any more about what we're doing, you know, what's happening with the project, feel free to contact me any time, you know, drop me an email or whatever. We've got a website as well, there's not much on it yet, but eventually there'll be something on it, but in general if you want to follow what we're doing or you want to find out, you know, what we're publishing or whatever, contact me any time.

DS: I've taken part in a bit of research before, but it was about same-sex relationships and long-term same-sex relationships, but that was a long time ago, so this is really good in relation to the North of Ireland attitudes, cultures and stuff like that, which is really good, thank you.

BH: Yeah, okay David.

DS: Take care.

BH: Have a good weekend.

DS: And yourself, thank you, okay Barry.

BH: Okay, bye bye.

DS: Bye, bye.

INTERVIEW ENDS