

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: So, Malcolm, I wonder if we could begin by telling me about your childhood, where you lived, siblings, your parents, etc.

Respondent: Oh, you want to do that? I was the only child of a Church of Ireland rector and his schoolteacher wife. I was born when my father was in charge of a church, little mission church in central Belfast which was attached to the cathedral, and we then moved to the country not long after I was born. When I was three and a half we moved back to the city where my father was rector of a parish, industrial north Belfast, for 13 and a half years. And then just before my 17th birthday my father moved to be vicar of Ballymacarrett, the shipyard parish in Belfast, historically a very important piece of church building and with a comparatively large congregation and he had three curates. And he served his last 20-odd years as vicar of Ballymacarrett, becoming for the last ten years Arch Deacon of the diocese. Was very much involved in his retirement in education, management of schools, and at the age of 80 he announced that he was going to give up being chairman as he was chairman of the school of governors of three separate schools in three different parts of east Belfast, a primary school, a secondary school and a special school, and he gave them all up within a space of six months in or around his 80th birthday.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: My mother was a schoolteacher, though she didn't teach after she was married, except supply teaching when I was a kid, she would go off maybe half a term this year, a term next year and nothing at all the year after, two terms the year after that, nothing at all the year after that, you know, in and out. She was doing supply teaching, which she seemed to enjoy, but she spent her time being effectively my father's curate, as the Church of Ireland calls them, unpaid curate, running round, doing things in the parish. It was very much an ecclesiastical, no ecclesiastical is the wrong... I don't mean that word. It was very much a church house. We lived on the premises. The church, the rectory where we lived, my father was the rector of the parish, the church school and the headmaster's house were all on the one piece of two acres of land in the middle of an industrial village on the edge of Belfast. Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so...

Respondent: That's family background. My father is from West Ulster, was from West Ulster. In turn, his mother was from Exeter. His father was also from West Ulster, my grandfather. My grandfather was a schoolteacher who then became a clergyman. He trained as a schoolteacher, qualified in 1900 and worked as a teacher for 15 years and then went and trained as a clergyman, and was a clergyman for the next 35 years. My mother's family were farmers from South Kildare, 40 miles southwest of Dublin. Respectable farmers, my grandparents always had... in fact both sets of grandparents always had a servant, not lots of servants, but a servant who, for most of the time, lived in both houses, both in Castle Derry(?) rectory where my grandfather was rector, and also Ballykillane, the farm in South Kildare. So, I come from what I suppose you would describe as a middle-class family right back through, which gives me, I suppose, a perspective of the solidity and dependability of society, which perhaps I shouldn't have that perspective, though both sets of grandparents and indeed my parents lived through times that were difficult in Ireland. Indeed we are going in... we hope to go in three months' time with a whole stack of cousins to the 100th anniversary of my grandparents' wedding.

Interviewer: Oh wow. (laughs)

Respondent: They were married on quite an auspicious day, though they did not realise how auspicious it was to become, they were married on Easter Monday 1916 and they then went off for a family holiday, for honeymoon, and only two or three weeks later did they find out that there's been a little bit of a trouble in Dublin. They were married in the country about 70 miles west of Dublin, but they didn't know anything about the fact that 500 men had stood up and fought the British Army because, of course, it wasn't any consequence. It was something that only became important after the end of the First World War when the people who had done the rebelling kept on reminding everybody they'd done the rebelling and it only became important after the political party, the Irish political party collapsed in a heap. So, my parents, both sets of parents had to live through difficulties. My grandfather and grandmother in the north were, of course, Northern Ireland was being established with the full agreement of my grandparents and where there could have been a lot of trouble but there wasn't. The Republic, where there was a bit of trouble in '22 and '23, when they had a civil war, two factions in the Republic fought one another to the bitter death, but it didn't seem to affect my grandparents at all. They were aware of it. My parents learnt about that as part of their family history. Though I'm an only child, we have quite a large family, both in the south, my mother's family connections, and now none of us in Northern Ireland, my father's connections, we've all left Northern Ireland, every one of us. The last of us to leave Northern Ireland left 30 years ago.

[0:09:37]

Interviewer: Oh gosh. Okay.

Respondent: So, yeah, I was... the major feature of my childhood was that I had polio at the age of four weeks, which didn't affect my brains. It means that I didn't walk very well and all those sorts of things, and parents, I think, sort of rolled up their sleeves and said, "Well, he's had polio, he's got a bad leg, he's got a bad arm, he's got dah, dah, what are we going to do? We'll just keep going and plod on," and plod on they did. I get the impression that in working class England the way in which kids with disabilities were dealt with in the '40s and '50s was very different from the way in which my parents dealt with me. My parents just simply said, "Get on with it," and on with it I got. And they did what they would have done, they've always maintained that they would have done anyway, which is to send me to prep school, which is a day school, from the age of 6 to 13, 6 to 12, my birthday's in August, and then off to school, boarding school at the age of 13, just after my 13th birthday. I went to the same school that my father had been to. The rug I had over my bed, we were allowed to bring an extra rug, was the rug my mother had over her bed when she was at boarding school. There's a sort of sense of history about a lot of these things.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: I did reasonably well at school. Like many kids, I shone at prep school and then when I go to school, I found that there were the products of half a dozen schools, prep schools there, and just because I had shone at one of them didn't mean to say I was going to shine at the school, but I did reasonably well and got one A level when I was 15 and two more when I was 16, and decided to go to Birmingham University, where I did... I was involved a lot with mathematics but also with social sciences.

Interviewer: So, what was your degree?

Respondent: At secondary... at first... at secondary school, at school, so I went and did a degree in mathematics, economics and statistics.

Interviewer: Oh, my husband's done that sort of thing. (laughs)

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Respondent: Right. Where did he go?

Interviewer: He went to Southampton and did economics and then he did a master's in Bath in development economics.

Respondent: We were essentially... we were becoming mathematical economics or econometricians, and that was an interesting development and it was a fascinating course. There were only ten of us. We were dealt with well, I think, by Birmingham and the fact that there were only ten of us and we were in the same classes throughout the three years meant we got to know one another fairly well. I lived in a hall of residence on the campus for my entire three years, which was great, absolutely wonderful, and I'm very proud of the fact that it was the first ever mixed hall of residence in England. It only became a mixed hall of residence two years before I went, I went in '65, and they had a... it was a women's hall for 100 years, 80 years before that, they had an experimental group of men in '63 and then in '64 it became properly mixed. But by '65 other universities were catching on and so we had to... every now and again the warden would pin up a notice saying, "We are expecting visitors from..." and I remember Nottingham being one of them, but there were others, and so this crowd of fuddy-duddies would come round and peer over us.

[0:14:46]

Interviewer: This pioneering hall of residence.

Respondent: Look at this pioneering hall of residence. And they would ask us what seemed to us all to be bloody stupid question, and yes, that's right. Yes. (laughs) So, that's my university. I did a year postgraduate and I went to be a university lecturer straight away. I went to the University of Dundee, where I taught for four years. I then went to the university, as a lecturer, I then went to the University of Durham as a lecturer for four more years. I then took a sort of sideways move because I got the chance to do something different. I had by this point become a social statistician rather than econometrician, and I got the opportunity to set up a degree in social research methods, joint honours degree in sociology and social research at what was then called Newcastle Polytechnic. I ran that until... went there in '77. The degree was approved, it was long processes in those days to get degrees approved, it was finally approved in 1980 and I ran it until 1989, when I then went to work for the Council for National Academic Awards, which you may or may not have heard of.

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: It was the organisation, the national organisation that gave the degrees that polytechnics had. Polytechnics were not allowed to, and colleges were not allowed to give their own degrees. They were given by one central body called the Council for National Academic Awards. And I went and worked there for... there was a headquarters team of advisors who went around organising and advising. I did that for three years, then came back to what by then had become Northumbria and took over, no, I didn't take over, it wasn't in existence, an academic development and quality assurance unit for the university, which located, as it happens, in Coach Lane, which was the headquarters of the faculty of health where I had my office. And I did that role with a team, I'm pleased to say, of... there were seven of us plus two admin staff going round and giving advice and offering, running seminars for staff and developing degree courses and all the rest of it and making sure that the institution was well organised for the giving of its own degrees, and in particular we'd merged with the health authority's nursing colleges, so we had to do a lot to do with dealing with nurse tutors who became lecturers in the university.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Right, that's me. Where's the gay rights bit?

Interviewer: So, moving back, when did you become aware of your sexual identity and how did you come out or was it a gradual thing over many years?

Respondent: Yes, I think it's probably fair to say that I was fairly slow at sexuality, full stop. As an undergraduate, I was more involved in university politics, had lots of friends, both boys and girls, I mean just did, but I was more concerned with the way in which the place organised itself and was involved in what was then called the Guild of Undergraduates, the student union of the University of Birmingham significantly, and I enjoyed that. I was also involved with the chaplaincy, the ecumenical chaplaincy, which met and, you know, was fascinating. I became involved with the Student Christian Movement, which in those days was the left wing of the two organisations that existed in most universities, the other one being the Christian Union. Student Christian Movement died a death during the late '70s, early and mid '80s really, maybe even before that it was dying. But in places like Birmingham in the mid '60s and indeed in Dundee when I went there as a lecturer and indeed in Durham when I went there as a lecturer, it was still very much a student group of some size. When did I actually get involved with anybody? I suppose that was really in Dundee. Yes, and various, I suppose you would describe them as fumbled attempts to make sense of relationships. That's the best way to describe it.

[0:21:04]

Interviewer: (laughs) Yes, yeah.

Respondent: It wasn't really until, yeah, that was '69 to '73, but the time I went from Dundee to Durham, there were things... by this point, of course, I was now 25, 26 in 1973, so I was really quite late in getting things going properly. Was I held up by society's attitudes? I'm not... I don't... it's difficult to know whether I was. I could construe what was happening as me being too frightened to make decisions, but actually I don't think that was the case. I think it was just that I didn't need to make decisions about anything.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I saw myself as an academic.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's interesting. Yeah.

Respondent: An academic with social and political interests.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, and that was your primary identity.

Respondent: Yes. Yes, that's right. Yes. That's right, yes. The LGCM connection, I got involved in the beginnings of that sort of by accident. Some of the staff of SCM, Student Christian Movement, they had regional staff that covered several, you know, one member of staff covered several universities, and so I got to know several of them as a student and then as a postgraduate and then as a lecturer in Dundee and then also as a lecturer in Durham. And so some of them knew that I would have identified myself as being gay if I'd been pushed, so by the time they were coming to produce an issue of the SCM magazine which was produced every... six times a year or something, they had a special supplement on the gay issue, I was nobbled and asked if I would act as editor of it, put it together. And that was itself quite an interesting experience because it meant that I had to get to know a number of people to find out what to do and get them to write things. And that was... the supplement was called Towards a Theology of Gay

Liberation. I was looking to see if I could find a copy of it and I'm not sure if there may be one in one of those files. It was, yes, it was actually produced in the autumn of '75, by which point LGCM had held a meeting in April '75, a group of people had held a meeting.

Interviewer: Yeah, '76 it was officially...

Respondent: Yes, but we'd had a meeting in April/May '75 and that got things going. I was at that because of preparing for this supplement. It took about a year to get it all organised, and so I was already involved in these things. "Why don't you go to that meeting which is being held at...?" so I did. Yes.

Interviewer: So, you were there right at the start.

Respondent: Yes, I was. Yes, I was there at the very start, and I was put on the committee at the beginning in '75. I'm the sort of person they love to put on committees. And I mean I'm quite happy with that because that's the style...

Interviewer: And you're still on lots of committees.

Respondent: Yes, different ones these days. I'm looking at this because I really ought to remind myself, where are we? Chapter three, here we are, there should be a note in here telling me. Yes, the first proper meeting of LGCM, calling itself the Gay Christian Movement, was in April '76.

[0:26:29]

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: The next meeting, the next annual meeting, was held on 26 March 1977.

Interviewer: Right, okay.

Respondent: We had got ourselves, as a committee, organised to invite a chap called Michael Keeling, who at that point was a lecturer in theology at the University of St Andrew's. Incidentally, the fact that St Andrew's and Dundee were only 12 miles apart didn't mean to say that I knew him when I was in Dundee because I didn't, you know, I just came across him entirely in a different context, and we'd invited Michael to give a lecture at the AGM, organisation LGCM was fairly academic in that sense that it was... and about a fortnight before, he backed out.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Respondent: And we were left in a mess and so what they said to me was, "Malcolm, you know what we're talking about, read us a paper". So, I sat down and spent a couple of weeks trying to make sense of what I was going to say and, in due course, I delivered a paper entitled towards theology of gay liberation, the framework for the debate.

Interviewer: Okay. And there it is.

Respondent: And there it is, yes, there it is. And it then got... then SCM, which of course in those days was also SCM Press, just technically nothing to do with the student movement, it was a separate, financially separate...

Interviewer: Yeah, and that still exists.

Respondent: It does still exist. It has since been bought up by one of the other big publishing, religious publishing houses. They said, "Why can't you make all of this into some sort of a book?" so I duly did. And from delivering the paper in March '76 through until the publication of this book in September '77, I spent that intervening 16 or 17 months, an embarrassingly large proportion of my time was spent trying to get papers sorted and getting them into some sort of context of being able to be published. I used many of the speakers at the conference, I'm sorry, I should say around about the time of the AGM of LGCM, in other words, a year after the very first meeting, not only was a conference being held by the Student Christian Movement entitled Towards Theology of Gay Liberation, but also LGCM was holding its proper first meeting. Those two events happened within about four or five weeks of one another. One of them happened just at the end of the spring term and the other one happened at the beginning of the summer term. The beginning of the summer term one was in Wick Court, which is outside Bristol Conference Centre, and we had 70 at it, giving papers, making comments, and they were used to develop the arguments and that became that.

Interviewer: Okay, just for the tape, Malcolm is holding up a book that he edited entitled Towards a Theology of Gay Liberation.

Respondent: It was published, as I say, in September/October '77. I'm, as I say, the author of one of the papers in it, as well as the editor of the whole thing. The conference from which the book emerged was a fascinating event and it went extremely well, with a range of people from people who were worthies(?) or about to become worthies in LGCM, right through to students in their first or second year at university, and it went extremely well in all of those respects. Remembering though that we're talking about a world where the women's movement was developing and emerging in its own way and the gay world only had a minority of women in it, partly because the gay male perceptions dominated and many women, I think, found that particularly annoying. We did our best, we, the men, did our best to incorporate as many women, but listen to my language now, I am saying we, the men, sought to incorporate the women. Just think about what that amounts to. And that, I'm afraid, was a feature of the way in which LGCM developed for the first five years, ten years maybe. I think things changed later on, perhaps not entirely, but they certainly did change. A feature of both the conference at Wick Court and much more particularly the first two or three big meetings of what became GCM was that they were dominated by young clergy.

[0:33:49]

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Respondent: Men.

Interviewer: Clergymen.

Respondent: Because there were no clergywomen. Dominated by young clergy. And indeed one of the things that we had to do was to stop them becoming so dominant that it became a group of Anglican clergy.

Interviewer: So, they were largely Anglican clergy or Catholic as well?

Respondent: There were one or two Roman Catholics and there were a handful of Methodists, but they were largely Anglican.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: It would be difficult, I would like to say that well over half the people at that first meeting were Anglican clergy. I'm pretty certain that wasn't the case. I think it's

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actually much more that the ones who had a lot to say were Anglican clergy. When we put together the first executive committee, we got a very fine Dominican, Roman Catholic Dominican priest, Giles Hibbert, to be the vice president, and an Anglican, Peter Ellers, to be the president. Yes, well, that worked for a time. But the real power behind the organisation was Jim Cotter. He was the brain. He was university chaplain in Cambridge. He was in his early 30s and he effectively led the organisation from the back rather than the front. He was the secretary. He was the under-secretary for the first spell, but he was the brains and he kept us all in some sort of order.

Interviewer: Okay. I didn't interview Jim before he died but I did the transcription which felt quite a privilege actually.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: It was a few weeks before he died, so yeah.

Respondent: So, he did get interviewed?

Interviewer: He got interviewed. He was the first or second person to be interviewed and we got there just in time, so yeah.

Respondent: Yes, he was a very, very, very fine man. I didn't have a great deal to do with him in the last 20 or 30 years, but certainly for the period that I had a lot to do with him, I found him to be a very impressive and gentle man. Yes, yes, I mean I kept in limited contact with his breathing spaces and his various little movements of small churches and things and his moves to North Wales and all the rest of it, but I couldn't claim to be seeing him every year even, or even every five years. But he was a very fine man indeed. And his job was to keep the rest of us in some sort of order. Yes.

Interviewer: So, GCM...

Respondent: GCM happened, out of that happened various flings. Indeed, I had a Christmas card from one of them, as indeed I have had every year since from somebody that I had a fling with at the Wick Court conference. He has just finished being cathedral warden of one of the south east's smaller cathedrals, but he became a schoolteacher. He was a student at the time. Yes. Then that movement, that involvement with LGCM was going on at the same time as an involvement here with the development of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, CHE, which again you will have heard of.

[0:38:34]

Interviewer: Yeah, I've heard of, yeah.

Respondent: And again you will recognise is an organisation that was largely male, which in the early '70s had got itself a fairly big branch in Newcastle, and by '74 we had begun to talk about setting up something in Durham, which indeed we did. This was almost entirely separate from the LGCM, there were one or two overlap people, and that became rather more than LGCM, became a focus of my social involvements. Out of that emerged, from my point of view, I moved on just as the book was being published, we were setting up a branch of the organisation Friend, which you will probably have come across in your histories.

Interviewer: Yeah, but I don't know a lot about it. Explain to me, yeah.

Respondent: Simplest explanation, a gay version of the Samaritans. Sort of halfway between the Samaritans and Gay Switchboard, in the middle, which in the late '70s, '80s and early and mid '90s was quite an organisation to make some sense of. We set up a branch in

Newcastle because that was the regional centre. I mean it was regional centre-based and I was the convener of it from '77 through to '81 and again in the late '80s for a year or so. I had an involvement with the national organisation and indeed emerged out of that was that, How Can We Help You, published by the National Council of Organisations, what do they call that company? Yes, Bedford Square Press, which still exists. National Council for Voluntary Organisations were concerned then and I guess more recently to find people who could write about the way in which voluntary organisations were developing and what they were doing, and so that's how that emerged. It had a previous history with the title Can We Help You with Gay Men's Press, which was developing itself as a publishing company. And it was written and then there was a big financial problem at Gay Men's Press and they pulled out of a number of books and almost went bust. And I was left in '86 with a completed book with it handed back to me by Gay Men's Press saying, "As you will know, this is one of a number of books we are unable to publish because of the state of our financial dah, dah, dah, we hope you will be able to find alternative, dah, dah". So, it took two and a half years for it to get published.

Interviewer: But it got published.

Respondent: It had got published. And indeed those are my two major contributions to the literature on the gay movement. There's not a lot else. I mean I've written articles for this and that and the other over the years, before during and after that.

Interviewer: Yeah, wow, impressive though.

Respondent: But nothing of any major consequence. The only other thing that I'll throw in just now because it's appropriate in this context, I'm sorry, if I'm rambling, you must tell me to stop rambling. There was a point in the early '80s when Friend had to make a very difficult decision, Friend the organisation nationally, as to what they were going to do, we were going to do, about AIDS, and whether we were going to try to run the AIDS crisis ourselves or deliberately avoid it and encourage others to set up AIDS-related organisations. And we took the decision in about '82, early '83, that we would back off from AIDS, let other people get on and do that. And various organisations got set up, one that you'll probably have come across, The Terence Higgins Trust, another you'll have come across, London Lighthouse. They didn't exist in the early '80s, they only became into existence as the '80s went on. And Friend withdrew and said, "No, no, we're going to specifically continue to deal with people who have difficulties over sexuality and we're going to train volunteers to assist them to make sense of dah, dah, dah..." And that's what we did, continued. Now, where does that take me to? Yeah, in the middle of all that I had various flings. I had a boyfriend of sorts from February '79 through to September '81. That fell apart rather than split up, it just didn't happen any longer. And in due course I met him.

[0:46:04]

Interviewer: Him being, for the tape?

Respondent: Sorry, oh, sorry, yes, yes, met Christopher Warday(?) in... we met in May '84. Actually, funnily enough, we were both attending a service where another... since I say another because he is an Anglican cleric, another Anglican cleric was being introduced to a new parish and we were at the service that involved with that, and we ended up meeting at that and sitting and gossiping in a pub and then going out together. And things moved slowly and steadily and developed and we became an entity after a fashion, in our way. We've been together for 31 and a half years.

Interviewer: Congratulations. (laughs) It's a very long time these days. (laughs)

Respondent: Yes, and I hope he isn't too fed up with me. Once I had published the book on Friend, yes, the book on Friend, once it had actually got published in February '89, and as I already said, I moved to London in the summer of '89, I pulled right back from any involvement in anything.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Largely because I had done the book, but that's not the most important thing, the most important thing was that I was moving to London and trying to maintain a relationship in the northeast at the same time and it just didn't seem to be sensible to try and do a whole host of other supplementary activities that I had been doing, added to which I had been involved with Friend for 12 years, in this time I'd done the book, it was time I let them get on with it. I'd gone back onto the LGCM executive, as I said, in the late '80s for a couple of years, but that was for a very particular purpose and didn't actually involve me being involved in LGCM more than attending committee meetings and one or two difficult meetings in addition to that with church leaders. So, I backed right away and for three years spent my time chasing up and down the country, chasing around the country because of course we were advising all over the place, and by the time we got to '92 and I'd gone back here to Newcastle, to Northumbria as it had become, I had no real interest in getting involved again in Friend. I maintained my membership of LGCM, I kept my friendship, is that the right word, with Richard Kirker. Richard is a very fine chap. Organising one's way around his prickles takes some time. And occasionally, particularly if one is of firm views oneself, the prickles don't work terribly well. But I think he did a surprisingly good job in keeping LGCM going the way he did. There will no doubt be others who, with the hindsight of history, will say that he ought to have done this or that or the other at various points in his history, and they may or may not be right, but he kept it going and it survived. That's the important thing, it survived. Yes, Changing Attitudes came into existence largely as a result of a row, I understand, I wasn't involved, between him and... what's the Changing Attitudes chap's name?

Interviewer: Oh, Colin.

Respondent: Colin Coward, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, he was. It's Jeremy Timms now, isn't it?

Respondent: Yeah, yeah, but Colin Coward was...

Interviewer: Yeah, at the time it was, yeah.

Respondent: Changing Attitudes right through from the mid '90s through to two or three years ago.

Interviewer: Yeah.

[0:51:15]

Respondent: So, for 10 or 15 years. Richard and Colin did not get on. Efforts to try and get them to relate to one another, including efforts by me but not only by any means, much more importantly by other people, failed and the two organisations went in slightly different directions. I think in lots of ways that was probably a good thing because it meant there were two organisations appearing to do much of the same work, but in certain contexts, particularly in the context of how the Church of England was developing, it was only one part of LGCM was into. There could be seen to be two different approaches to that from within a liberal/radical perspective. And that's no harm, particularly on occasions when they could be persuaded to agree, which meant that there was a bit more force and effort, particularly over the outcome of the 1998 Lambeth conference, where there was

the two. They did relate to one another with others and make something of a show of what a farce that conference was.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Respondent: So, I then backed out of those things and became a middle-aged human being.

Interviewer: That's no bad thing.

Respondent: No, no, and, as you've gathered, I've been involved in various organisations.

Interviewer: Had your fingers in many pies, it has to be said.

Respondent: Well, I have, yes, I have, and I'm pleased about that because I take the view that I have the background and the ability to take some sort of involvement in all sorts of voluntary organisations. Having chosen, if that's the right word and we can get into a discussion about, but I don't want to at this point, chose not to have children and therefore not spending time, money, effort looking after children, apart from godchildren and cousins' children and things like that. Therefore I devote a portion of my time to various organisations that appeal to me.

Interviewer: Yeah, very laudable, and becoming children.

Respondent: Well, I mean, yeah, that's just the way of it, the way these things happen, and I think that if I hadn't, no, I don't know where that's going. I would have become very, very, very much sort of a dead-in-the-whole third-rate academic and it would have been very, very boring, and I didn't, I became a second-rate academic and slightly more interesting.

Interviewer: (laughs) Talk to me briefly about that difficult period in LGCM with St Botolph's and being thrown out and that whole episode.

Respondent: Do you know anything about that episode at all?

Interviewer: I do but I'd like it for the tape, if you could provide background.

Respondent: Right. My understanding of that is that Malcolm Johnson, the rector of St Botolph's, a very fine man, very, very fine man, I don't even know whether he's still live.

Interviewer: No idea.

Respondent: Had a partner called Robert who was an accountant. Was involved at the beginning of LGCM, but very much in the background. You know, he provided the places for us to meet, he found us the meeting at the Sir John Cass School for the opening first meeting, things like that, I mean because he was a governor and he'd got it all sorted and he was all lined up and all that, and he did all of that sort of background stuff. He was also fairly friendly with Jim Cotter. You know, I don't know whether that's true; I think that they became friends as a consequence. Forget that bit. And when it came to finding somewhere to put the office, he said, "Well, you could go in the tower". Have you ever been to St Botolph's?

[0:56:23]

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: There is, in the tower, the last time I was there was the early '80s, and getting there was a nightmare and I never tried it ever again. It was up a winding staircase with a

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rope that you had to hang onto for grim death and you went round and round and round until you got to the top. And when you got to the top, you had this big room, yes, about the size of this end of this room.

Interviewer: But it would have failed all disability access.

Respondent: Oh, yeah, absolutely. And everything else. But every other... but yeah, of course, I mean it just was impossible. And Richard, of course, could leap up and down these stairs like nobody. And that was his office. And I remember it being a well-organised office space. He had got it all sorted and he knew where everything was and all the rest of it, but it was impossible for meetings, for me anyway, and so we met in the church downstairs, we met in some other bit of the church, wherever it happened to be appropriate. Yes. We apparently, though we didn't know it, we the committee didn't know it, were there only on the say so of the rector. Now, I actually think that I was given to understand that we had the agreement of the rector and wardens, which is the legal entity. But then the Arch Deacon of London got hold of this and he was a man of very, very firm views on the gay issue, very, very firm, and he simply turfed us out.

Interviewer: Just like that?

Respondent: We got a stay of execution by going to the courts and there was to be a hearing. Now were they the church courts or were they the civil courts? I think they were church courts, but we got a stay till we could get our argument sorted. And somebody in a fairly senior position tried to get us all to negotiate. Malcolm Johnson was in a very difficult position because he was the man in the wrong, apparently.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And it went on for about a year, but it was very clear we were going to lose from the word go. It was very clear that the only way we could win was by the Arch Deacon of London backing down.

Interviewer: Which wasn't going to happen by the sounds of it. (laughs)

Respondent: And there was no Bishop of London to tell him to back down, or no sensible Bishop of London. I mean a sensible Bishop of London would have told him to back off. So, we were heaved out and Richard managed to get himself into, oh, dear God, help us, I can't even remember the name of the place.

Interviewer: Oxford House.

Respondent: Oxford House, which was part of the style of Richard. He knew somebody who knew somebody who was chairman of the trustees or something and somebody said something to somebody and it was all sorted within a month, and in we went and that was the end of it. And we were there from '89 until...

Interviewer: '13, 2013, I think.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: 2014.

[1:01:14]

Respondent: So, 25 years.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

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Respondent: 25 years in Oxford House.

[End of Transcript]