

**Mary Interview, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2006 in Trinity College Dublin.**

1. CH: I was born in June 1939, just at the outbreak of the war. I lived at that time in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England where my father was a secondary school teacher. He was of Irish stock from Co. Down and interestingly enough, his parents had come from Co. Down as emigrants, in the eighteen somethings and had met in the Irish Club in Newcastle and found that they came from the opposite sides of a mountain in Co. Down. They would never have met in Ireland because they were in different parishes and went in different directions but they met in Newcastle and got married. My father was the youngest son of this particular family. He was very Irish and spent every summer in Ireland on the family farm belonging to his mother. It was a very small farm in Co. Down.
2. He met my mother in – of all places – Lough Derg in 1935, I think. He had gone to the farm and went from there to Lough Derg and met my mother. This is just a little aside story which I think is quite interesting because she was taking her golf clubs with her to Lough Derg to go on for a holiday in Bundoran. My father was a good golfer and he saw these two young ladies trying to get on a boat in Lough Derg with the golf clubs. He went forward to offer help and that was how they met.
3. She then was living at that time in Lisburn. She was a school teacher, the daughter of the principal of a school in Lisburn and she taught in her father's school. After she met my father they corresponded and she came then, after they married, to live with my father in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. So she was from Lisburn and she found it quite difficult and strange in Newcastle at first.
4. They had one son, Colm who was born in 1937 and then I was born in 1939, in June 1939. As a secondary school teacher my father had very long holidays and the minute the holidays came we all bundled to the train to Stranraer, the ferry from Stranraer to Larne and the train from Larne to Belfast and then whatever way we got to the place where my grandparents had – it wasn't just a summer holiday cottage, it was an all year round cottage. In those days the cottages were rented by the year and my grandfather had rented this cottage in Coney Island near Ardglass for something like forty years.
5. MM: Could I just interrupt you for a second please? Was this something they had done before the year when they had your brother or was it just because it was 1939?
6. CH: No, every chance my mother got she was on the boat home so it was something they had done every summer. But that particular year – she was the only one married and her other five brothers and sisters, they were staying in the cottage so we rented a house. Coney Island is a small seaside village, it's not even a village, which hasn't changed much since those days. The nearest village to it is Ardglass, the fishing village up on the coast and Coney Island then was just a cluster of houses really. There was rather a stony beach, a pleasant beach but not a dramatic beach and my mother grew up there every summer, from her early years right through her teens. So, as there was a good golf course in Ardglass there was no problem getting my father to go there for holidays, so we went there.
7. Well, to bring in the war connection, obviously in June 1939 I've no idea historically what the thinking was but I was in a carry cot and I was brought as usual to Coney Island for the holidays. In the meantime, my father taught in a school called St. Cuthbert's Grammar School in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was a good bit older than my mother and would have

been too old to be called up for military service. He was forty, perhaps forty two or three at that stage, but anyway, the school would have been located centrally in Newcastle which they reckoned would have been a prominent target for bombing because of the big industrial complexes and the shipyards etc. So evacuation seemed to be all the thing and they arranged to evacuate the school from wherever it was in the centre of Newcastle, out to the Lake District, and they put my father in charge of the evacuation. He was called back from his holidays in Ireland to go back to evacuate the school, which meant going to the Lake District, Cockermouth, and finding board and lodging for every pupil and every teacher and finding a place where they could have classrooms and continue lessons. It must have been quite a formidable task. So obviously, he was going to be missing from the family home in Newcastle.

8. I think there was an expectation that the war was not going to last very long and this was maybe why my grandfather said to my mother 'why don't you stay on with us?' I think they went back to Lisburn at the end of the summer and he said 'once the war is over, you can go back'. So we went initially, my mother and a one and a half year old and a baby to stay in their comfortable house in Lisburn which had four bedrooms, but which also had five adults – the children and the parents there. I imagine it must have been quite difficult for my mother to keep us out from under their feet and for my uncles and aunts to have small children there as well. Then, as I understand it, what happened was that my mother's next sister was a teacher and that it was very hard to get jobs in teaching and she was offered a job in a place called Legamaddy in Co. Down, which would be a small country school and she loved Co. Down because of the Ardglass and Coney Island connection and would have loved to take the job but my grandmother worried about where she would stay and what she would do. So they hit upon this brilliant notion of having my aunt first of all learn to drive, so she bought a new Ford little car and to open up the summer house in Coney Island and my mother and the two of us and our aunt would establish our residence there. My aunt would be able to work, to drive every day to Legamaddy, and we would be living in this holiday house.
9. MM: This was before petrol rationing obviously? [Both laugh].
10. CH: Yes, this was before petrol rationing. She cycled also but I don't know the distances, whether it would have been difficult to cycle. I could describe the cottage because it might give you a little idea of the circumstances if you do travel on the road from Killoch up to Ardglass, Coney Island is really the beach but you pass a castellated farmhouse, really a white castellated farmhouse with two cottages attached to it straight on to the road. The person who owned the castellated farmhouse was George Gilchrist, the Gilchrist family and they were terribly nice and kind. It was interesting in the context of the modern Protestant v. Catholic thing that they would have been Protestants and they would have been perfectly civil and absolutely kind and everything except as my grandfather used to say 'around the twelfth of July George got a bit cross' and avoided him but otherwise he would have been perfectly amicable. It was the same with all the people living in Ardglass and Coney Island. There seems to have been very little friction or no visible friction.
11. MM: Did you ever discuss, in a later time, whether that might have been because your grandparents were professionals and that as middle class people they were more acceptable to Mr. Gilchrist?

12. CH: I wouldn't think so because looking back at Ardglass, it was predominantly Catholic, I think seventy per cent were Catholic. I was never conscious of it and my best friend, through all my school days going to Coney Island for the holidays, was a Protestant from one of the houses on the seafront.
13. MM: One of my other interviewees was evacuated from the Falls Road to Ardglass with her parents.
14. CH: That's interesting. Well, there we were in Coney Island the main house would have been quite spacious and gracious but the two cottages were long and low and the cottage attached to the main house was called One Tree Cottage because there was a tree just outside and it was always kept for the relatives of the Gilchrists. Mrs. Gilchrist's sisters and their children came in the summer and it was the second house that they let to my grandfather for something like forty years. We always went there for the holidays and then we went there for the war. I even drew myself a little map to remind myself of what it looked like and how it was laid out. The bedrooms were tiny and there was no water, no electricity, no inside toilet. The toilet was down, quite a distance away – we used to call it The Ivy House – over a stream and it was always kept spotless and smelling of Jeyes Fluid and all sorts of things [laughs]. It was just a wooden bench with a hole in it and my grandfather was very interested in everything Irish and he used to call it 'Tondragee' which apparently means 'back to the wind' [laugh]. When you were sitting on the bench this was pretty obviously why it was called that but it was fine because the stream carried everything away and every year one of the locals came and dug out everything. I don't quite know what happened but it was always – it wasn't a place that you hated to go into and of course, the toilet paper was always bits of newspaper cut up and put in on a handle.
15. MM: I suppose it was probably a question of expectations too but it must have been pretty severe in a Co. Down winter?
16. CH: Hard for my mother I'm sure. There was a range so there was the problem of getting coal. There was a Ditma, which was a kind of double burner with a little box sitting on top of it for cooking and there was the Primus stove. There weren't Tilly lamps, which we had later, but there would have just been oil lamps which would have meant somebody trimming the lamps every morning and filling them up with oil.
17. MM: So heat came from open fires and the range?
18. CH: Yes and there would have been candles in the bedrooms, as far as I remember. Certainly, nothing more substantial than that but these were just the memories that came back to me when I was thinking about it. There were always difficulties with the range and they had to collect wood. We had a maid and there was my mother and the two of us. The maid was a girl from Killoch called Annie McElwaine, who loved us to bits, absolutely fabulous, and she used to take us off on long walks. Sometimes she used to take us to the beach and at that time, a coal boat had gone down on the point – Ardglass is in here and Coney Island is on this side and there is quite a difficult headland between them and the coal boat had foundered on these rocks. We used to go with our buckets and I can remember that you were the best girl in the world if you picked up lots of bits of coal from the beach. The coal was then used in the range, they used to call it sea coal. They used to burn whin because I can remember my aunt saying it was very dry.
19. MM: What is that?

20. CH: It's gorse, I don't know how you picked it but they call it whin in the North of Ireland and you put it into the range and you got this tremendous whoosh of heat. They would cook pancakes for us on the range with the heat. There was another thing, they had a slop bucket which I can still picture, it was a green metal enamel bucket with a lid. Obviously, everybody was very discreet about bodily functions and there never was a problem but you couldn't go down to the Ivy House during the night, although you did during the day. But in the morning the maid collected the slops and in the wintertime I remember it was a big treat having a hot water bottle and in the morning the hot water bottle was emptied into the washstand, into the enamel basin, and the cold was off that water so you were able to wash in the warmish water from the hot water bottle.
21. MM: Very eco friendly.
22. CH: Yes [both laugh]. I can also remember cleaning my teeth and having a little toothpaste and some water and then spitting into the water you had washed in and making little patterns. What I'm saying is that hygiene was still hugely important even though the actual facilities were very poor.
23. MM: Was this the normal way that the house would have been run or was it because of the shortage of things like coal and other commodities that were rationed in wartime?  
CH: No, it was like that even when I can remember it. Everything was scrubbed, even the deal table in the kitchen was scrubbed. We collected water in big enamel buckets – I wouldn't have been doing it but presumably the maid did it and there was a pump in the yard and you would go and help to pump and then it had to be carried across the yard. The yard was straight outside the door. There was no back garden. The house was just along the strip and at the back there was the back door and there was the yard with the hens and the byre and everything. We used to throw the scraps out for the hens.
24. MM: So you had eggs and milk?
25. CH: We had eggs. It wasn't a dairy farm but we went up the road and we had these milk containers and we used to collect warm milk. I remember we had no fridge but we had a larder off the kitchen and everything was stone floor and up from the stone floor and up from that the water was kept on a shelf. All the crockery was that blue and white stuff, the Willow pattern, and the meat and everything was kept in a tin box on a shelf in the larder. There was a little muslin flap that was put over it to keep out flies or anything like that and it was all – it was difficult living and it must have been very hard for my mother, very hard work. Everything could be delivered. It was a good walk up to Ardglass but the bread man called daily and we dealt with – you see interestingly, when you talk about the Protestant/Catholic thing – there were two shops in Ardglass, two grocer shops. One was Milligan's, that would have been a Catholic family and the other was Hunter's, and it was very prim and proper. My grandmother always dealt with Hunter's and you went up with a list to Hunter's and they just took the list and charged you and delivered. You didn't have to carry shopping or anything like that, so that was easier in a way.
26. No telephone, of course, well my aunt had the car which I suppose did make life easier but the facilities were very poor and my mother would have been quite delicate. She was pregnant a few times, I do know that, but there was only myself and my brother and on one occasion she had a stillborn child. She only told me that many years later, born in Coney Island, and her uncle was living in Ardglass at that time and he, having married a local girl

- from all the connections over the years, he buried the baby in some little coffin in their family grave in the graveyard in Ardglass. She only told me that many years later when my cousin died and we went to the funeral. She was very upset and she told me because she had a stillborn baby buried in a named grave but the baby was not named on the tombstone. It was interesting that they went so far as to bury the baby but there was no record as such of the baby.
27. It must have been very hard and it must have been very hard for my father because he was occupied with this big movement to the Lake District and the war not ending and showing no signs of ending. His family home in Newcastle – his parents had died – and in the family home was his sister who was also a teacher and his aunt. They both took ill during the war, they both got pleurisy so he moved them with a housekeeper to his new house. So they were living there and he was trying to mind them, he was trying to organise the evacuation and he was also visiting on every possible occasion on a very long journey to Coney Island. I remember him saying that one year he came thirteen times which was more than once a month with all the other things. Of course, he was a schoolteacher and one of his ex pupils was the emigration officer at Stranraer and he was still there when we used to come over for our summer holidays. He used to look after him but it was still very difficult. I remember seeing all his travel documents and they were stamped so many times. It was hard for him.
28. He used to try and find toys and bring them to us and I remember he bought a train set and sent it to my brother, one time. I don't remember anything that he brought especially to me but I remember when he came, it was one of the tragedies of this sort of thing, that I used to hide behind my mother's skirt and say 'that's not my daddy, Granda is my daddy'. I think this is probably typical of what happened during all those wartime separations.
29. MM: It must have been really difficult, especially for fathers like yours who were away through no choice of their own.
30. CH: It was extremely difficult and then the war dragged on and dragged on and I know we came back to Newcastle in January 1944, because my mother had just had enough. The aunt and my father's sister had both died and the house was once more empty. Again, just a little side, but my mother was devastated when she went home because she had been a bride in the 1930s when there was affluence and she was the eldest child of the family with all my grandfather's connections. She had lots of beautiful wedding presents, china and linen and everything, and of course, the housekeeper had come with the aunt and sister and she said of this beautiful set of china, she had twelve saucers, twelve plates and not a single cup [laughs]. She had to come back to all of that, so it was difficult.
31. MM: Quite a strain. So you didn't go to school in Coney Island?
32. CH: No, but my brother did.
33. MM: Was this the school where your aunt was teaching?
34. CH: No, Legamaddy was a good distance away. I would have to look at a map of Co. Down again to see where Legamaddy was in relation to Coney Island. Legamaddy was a real country school and my aunt loved the country children. She still had connections with the families because we always used to go and visit them years later. They used to provide country butter, you know, proper country butter and eggs and things. She always told this story of being asked by one parent what would they get for let's say Lizzie for her

- birthday, Miss Fitzpatrick and my aunt saying ‘well, what about a book?’ and them saying ‘but she has a book already’ [laughs]. She always used to tell that story.
35. It would have been in the primary school up in Ardglass that my brother started. He was a year and a half older than I and my mother used to presumably leave me with the maid and walk up quite a long hill to Ardglass. One time, she had only just managed to walk back and when she got home my brother was standing on the doorstep, having got a lift back from the breadman. He didn’t like school and he just left and walked home himself.
36. There were children who were evacuees there in the school. The numbers were quite elevated. Also, of course, it was a great place for people who wanted to leave Belfast in the Troubles. The nature of Ardglass changed enormously and people who had holiday homes in Ardglass came to live there more permanently because there was a daily bus and they could go back up to Belfast. It was a rather long daily journey but it was possible.
37. MM: The other lady I mentioned, her family had also been used to going to Ardglass for their holidays and then their father rented a house for them to stay in for some time during the war. Her clearest memory is of the Ardglass herrings.
38. CH: Every Friday George Milligan, one of the Milligan sons – my grandfather, you see, would have had a great network, I don’t know how but he was a great socialiser and a great man in his own way and he had this network – and one of the Milligan sons dealt with the deliveries and the collections so he always looked after the herring for us on a Friday. The other son was a coal merchant and my grandfather spoke to him and we always got a bit of a supply of coal, whatever was going. But every Friday it was herrings, Ardglass herrings, with the bones and everything.
39. MM: Was that the Catholic tradition of no meat on Fridays?
40. CH: Oh yes, it was definitely the Catholic tradition. The smell of herring would be all over the place but we loved them always. My mother was good at pickling herring and she used to roll them up in vinegar and make pickled roll mops. But you see, Mary, a lot of this would have been what I remember from later visits to Coney Island and I’m probably mixing in what I heard later about the wartime experiences because I was very young and I don’t know if I would remember very much of my own. It didn’t change; it was the same for years and years.
41. MM: But there were obviously a lot of family stories that were told often?
42. CH: Oh yes, a huge number of family stories. This is another little one that has just come into my head now. Washing was a huge chore because first of all you had to collect the water and then you had to warm the water. Monday was washday and the range was lit and a bath was filled up. I remember being bathed in a zinc bath but I don’t know whether they used the same zinc bath for the washing and whether they heated the water in the bath or whether they heated it in pots and put it in. We were children underfoot at that stage and obviously they’d give you something to keep you occupied because we didn’t have many toys. So they always gave us coloured chalks on a Monday and the floor of the kitchen was flagged and we used to draw to our heart’s content on the kitchen floor. Then the water that had been left over from the clothes, that was the day that the kitchen floor was cleaned and it was cleaned so that all your chalk marks were washed away by the water. I can remember that.

43. MM: There's an incredible sense of the practicality of everything being blended into everything else and such a sensible use of the scarce resources.
44. CH: Yes. The iron was difficult and I can remember the iron was a big metal box with a little gate that lifted in the end and these iron shaped – I don't know what they were – but they were put into the fire, into the range and then lifted out with thongs and then slipped into the end where a lid dropped down. They spat on the iron to make sure it was hot and ironed the collars and the cuffs first but there was no relaxation in standards, even though it was difficult. Things were ironed and things were washed – maybe not as often as we do now but it was absolutely hard work.
45. MM: Would Annie the maid have lived in?
46. CH: I don't think so. I'm not sure but I don't think so. I think she lived in Killoch because we used to be taken on these walks and sometimes we'd go to her house in Killoch, which was even smaller than our cottage in Coney Island. She used to walk us round the four roads and I've been back since and it's quite a walk. I suppose I was in a buggy or pushchair but this was intended to tire you out.
47. MM: It does strike me that in so many accounts including of women in the cities, but women just did not get to sit down very often. There was always so much work to do.
48. CH: They were very resilient.
49. The farm was interesting in itself. It would have been a mixed farm – I don't think it was a dairy farm but there would have been animals in the byre and there would be hens in the farmyard. There would be cats and a dog around and all the farm machinery.
50. MM: Who looked after all of this?
51. CH: This would have been Mr. Gilchrist and his son but also there was quite a sad wartime experience for them. Their eldest son had joined the British army, or the Navy, I think it was and was killed in action. So they were affected by this tragedy and then the younger son started to work on the farm so there was a sadness about them; definitely a sadness. But they were terribly kind and nice and we used to go to the place where the hens nested and take out the eggs and bring them to Mrs. Gilchrist and then my mother used to buy eggs from her. We ate a lot of eggs [laughs].
52. MM: For how many years were you doing this, going back and forth between England and Northern Ireland in the summers?
53. CH: Until 1957.
54. MM: So you must have had a very strong relationship after all that time.
55. CH: Yes, and then the cousins, Mrs. Gilchrist's relatives used to stay in the cottage next to the farmhouse and we grew up with all of them. There was never any difference except that we went to Mass on a Sunday and they didn't. We played with them all the time and there was absolutely – we had an awareness that they weren't of the same religion as you – but there was absolutely no problem with any other form of intercourse at all. We played and we swam and did everything together.
56. MM: Was there every any mention in the family stories of discussion about the South being neutral? Did that subject come up at all, especially since they had lost a son?
57. CH: I don't think the South ever came into the stories about the war, except in terms of smuggling [laughs]. One of my mother's aunts was married and living in Dublin and she used to come up and down to Belfast bringing things that were impossible to get because

things were that much easier in the South. Again, it was a time of maids. People who wouldn't have been that well off, the husband would have been a civil servant, but they would always have had a bottle of whiskey in the sideboard but my great uncle would not have drunk whiskey, it would have been there for visitors. It would have been forbidden to bring it through because the Customs would have taken it. So one time when she was coming through to Belfast she emptied the whiskey into a Milk of Magnesia bottle and produced it to her brother in Belfast. He took one taste of it and spat it out and said it was cold tea. Apparently the maid had spent the previous time tipping the whiskey and filling it up with cold tea [both laugh]. That was just one of the family stories that they would tell and also about wrapping nylons around their bodies to bring them up and other little things. I think they were very difficult times and food was in short supply and rationing was definitely there.

58. MM: In the South there seems to have been a feeling that they were very badly off in terms of rationing but compared to Britain and Northern Ireland, the rations were fairly generous.
59. CH: Well, my memories of rationing would have been more from when we went back to Newcastle in 1944 and 1945 and always the ration book and then the coupons to be cut out and the two ounces of sweets on a Sunday morning from the sweet shop.
60. MM: Would you have been about old enough to go to school when you went back?
61. CH: I started school when we went back.
62. MM: That might have been part of your mother's thinking too? Did you go to the school where your father was principal?
63. CH: No, that was a boys' school. I went to the girls' primary school but then the war didn't end. That was a very severe winter and some of the winters after that were severe. There were pictures that I brought from my house at home of the winter of 1947 where there was snow up over people's heads. I think it accentuated the problems people had with not having much, no lavish feeding anyway. It was very austere. Also, one thing that I carry with me as a mark of those days is eating everything on your plate was almost – you had to eat whatever you were given. Not eating it would have been tantamount to waste, this idea that you couldn't waste anything. I initially carried it through to my own children and then I realised that you couldn't really, you should only eat what you need and you shouldn't be forcing yourself to eat. It's with difficult that I can do that now.
64. MM: My own mother has the same attitude. She would have been older than you but does remember having to make the most of everything.
65. CH: There was an awful lot of make do and mend and I remember a skirt being made out of a pair of my father's trousers, if you can imagine that. The seams were unpicked and the material used. Everything was used up, very thrifty and very provident way of life, which is gone [laughs].
66. MM: Recently my mother took part in a memory session about the Emergency which was set up for twelve and thirteen year old schoolboys and they were fascinated. She wasn't sure that they would be interested but things like hay box cooking and other things, they just couldn't get over the idea of what people had gone through.
67. CH: Talking about the eggs – when we were back in Newcastle, my mother went into the country and bought eggs and she sort of pickled them. There was stuff you could buy and you put the eggs into a bucket and you put this stuff on top and the eggs were preserved by

- this method. I don't know quite what it was but the other thing I remember is dried egg and the Yorkshire pudding made from dried egg [laughs].
68. MM: There seems to be absolutely unanimous agreement that dried egg was disgusting [both laugh].
69. CH: I don't know what else I can tell you. Is there anything you want to ask me?
70. MM: Do you ever talk to your brother now about his recollection of the war years and the family stories?
71. CH: Well, I've been married and living in Ireland – I met my Irishman in Newcastle, well, we lived in Norwich first – but we came back here and we've lived in Ireland since 1974. My brother lived in Newcastle and taught in the same school that my father taught in and I'm sure he would have lots of memories but he now is retired and he has moved up the coast in Seahouse, it's near the Scottish border. So I see him very rarely. My mother, of course, is dead so the memories have [pause]
72. MM: Well, it does tend to be stories of childhood and adolescence that last, where the memories become fixed.
73. Did you have a Coney Island accent when you went to school in Newcastle?
74. CH: Nobody ever commented on that so I don't know. I certainly never got a real Northeast accent – the Geordie accent is very strong. My mother kept her Irish accent all her life, she certainly never lost it. So I suppose that influence came through that she was never speaking with an English accent to us.
75. MM: Was the area that you were living in Newcastle spared the bombing?
76. CH: It would, yes. Newcastle was very badly bombed but we lived in the suburbs but again, this lovely new house that she had moved into as a bride, it was on the side of a hill and down in the valley all the Ack-Ack guns were lined up to protect Newcastle. They made so much noise and there were so many reverberations that all the ceilings were criss-crossed with cracks. It was very difficult for her to go back and to adjust and also, before the war she had a maid and even though it was a very modest house, and my father was a secondary teacher, there would always have been a maid. After the war there were no maids any more because the maid that she had had gone into the WAAF and didn't want to work as a domestic servant so it was quite a rude awakening.
77. MM: Had she been back in the course of the war?
78. CH: No, she'd never been back.
79. MM: So it was over five years since she had seen her home? Probably holding this idea of what she would be coming back to?
80. CH: Yes. I feel she had a very tough life really and it really brought it home to me when I had one of my children when she told me about the still born child and the grave in Ardglass.
81. MM: I'm sure the physical conditions she was dealing with didn't help in that regard.
82. CH: No, it must have been really rough. I suppose they must have gone to Belfast from time to time to see my grandparents but I can see it myself, the difficulty of having one child's family, children, in a house of young adults. It must have been very difficult.
83. MM: Young adults tend not to be that patient, especially if the children are not their own.
84. CH: Yes, although my uncles were fabulous. I can still remember them laying eggs, they used to pretend to lay eggs [laughs] and these sort of funny little stories.

85. MM: The aunt who was out teaching – would she have taken a share of the housework?
86. CH: She would have done stuff yes, she was like a second mother to us. There was always a special relationship with her all our lives. She didn't marry herself, and she was terribly fond of us always. We knew it and as I say, there was Annie McElwaine. I think we didn't suffer from any lack of love; it was lack of our father really. You imagine many circumstances now where there is an absent father and it must be difficult.
87. MM: When you went back in 1944 were you able to resume the relationship with him?
88. CH: I don't know; it's rather difficult because he died when I was only seventeen or eighteen and he was quite a strong disciplinarian so I suppose I never really got to know him as an adult, which was a great sadness. He was terribly fond of us and terribly proud of us but I don't think we were as close as my children would have been to my husband. It made him a little distant. I'm not really sure about that; you miss out on those childhood memories. Is there anything else you wanted to know?
89. MM: Well, before we started I was wondering if you had been part of an organised evacuation scheme but clearly that was not the case. I'm interested in how those evacuations were organised but you may not know much about your father's arrangements.
90. CH: Well, they came back from the school in Cockermouth to Newcastle. That whole arrangement in Cockermouth lasted – I don't know, a couple of years, I think – and then they came back. I think everybody thought the war would be over in six months that it wouldn't last as long as it did. As an historian, you probably know the dates a bit better but certainly in the June of 1939 they didn't seem to have any problem going on holiday and there was no feeling – was it September that war was declared?
91. MM: It was declared on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September but in June there still seems to have been a widespread belief that Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler had worked and that war had been staved off. But the winter of 1939 saw the 'phony war' as it's been called and it wasn't until mid 1940 that the Battle of Britain took place and the war came to Britain. Of course, Newcastle was very badly bombed.
92. CH: Yes, it was very badly affected and there was no question of my mother going back at all. Certainly, even going back in January 1944 there was big apprehension .
93. MM: Well it was on the turn by then and by June there was the invasion of France through Normandy and the beginning of the push back. But they probably couldn't have been really sure and because Newcastle was such an obvious target with the industrial complexes and the shipping they must have been very anxious. Would you remember the physical remains of the bombing raids?
94. CH: I remember the bomb sites and I remember the Rosemary Willow – you know that pink flower that grows, it's the first thing to colonise waste ground – but I don't really remember the bombs. We would have been living in the suburbs, as I say, and the only thing we would have been aware of was that the ceilings were always cracked. Of course, they should have been taken down and replastered but they were just touched up.
95. MM: There probably wasn't anyone to do the work at that time.
96. CH: Or the materials, no.
97. MM: Could you see the Ack-Ack guns from your house?
98. CH: No, but I knew exactly where they were.
99. MM: I really would have such sympathy for your mother – it must have been very hard.

100. CH: Yes, I think she put up with it but it wasn't what she'd envisaged. But you never know what's ahead of us, do you?
101. MM: When you were growing up, as an adolescent in secondary school, were you conscious of any anxiety that you might have to deal with something similar?
102. CH: No, I had very happy school days. But one of the things that happened to me – there was an American psychologist in Cincinnati who decided that the way to end all wars in the future was to have children, at the age before they had any awareness or hatred or other nations etc., getting together and making friends and then they would carry this friendship through and make the world a better place. Cincinnati was the home base of Proctor & Gamble and the English base was Newcastle-upon-Tyne so Proctor & Gamble financed groups of six children from various Scandinavian countries, from France, Germany, Austria and the U.S.A. and Mexico, various places, to meet together in the U.S.A. for a camp. They would be observed by psychologists to see how different children from different nationalities reacted to one another and I was chosen from my school to represent England, but it was Newcastle really. There were six children, three boys and three girls from Newcastle. So in 1951, I actually went to America, from Prestwick and then down to London and flew across the Atlantic, when people weren't flying at all. I was eleven and this is why I'm telling you this. When we arrived, we arrived in New York and we got a ticker tape welcome and we were taken by train across to Cincinnati, in our school uniforms as would have been the formal English way. This was the gymslip and the blouse – when the temperature was sizzling – and then we spent a month in this summer camp. It was the lavishness of the food, we could not believe it. There were chicken legs and barbecues and a machine with Coca Cola to help yourself any time you wanted it. It was just the contrast and that would be when I was eleven. There were things that we had never seen in our lives before – an ice cream cake – and they all wanted to entertain us and give us the very best. So we made those connections then and I still meet and see the people that I met in 1951, we have reunions. We met again and the psychologists took notes whenever they drew you out from your games and they'd ask you to join up dots [laughs] and they'd ask you how did you like the German boys so there was a whole lot going on. CISV was the name of the organisation and it's still going strong. It's not in Ireland but they still have the camps in Cincinnati.
103. MM: How did the European children get along with each other so soon after the war?
104. CH: The Norwegians were very anti-German – I think any country that had actually been occupied had a different outlook altogether. One of them that I met at a reunion, he reminisced that when we were on the train journey from New York and you must remember that we were only eleven or twelve years old, when we were on this train journey from New York to Cincinnati, all in the same compartment, this German boy started playing a mouth organ really beautifully. He remembered thinking that there are some good things that came out of Germany and that was his first real encounter with German children. So that was a very positive experience. Certainly my parents would have been very tolerant.
105. Incomprehensible section due to interference on tape for approximately one minute.
106. CH: I know she was Jewish, this American girl who said she was the 'token Jew' and there was also a black girl, one of the American girls was coloured, but children don't think like

- that, they don't see colours and I didn't even know what a Jew was. So I think they were trying to make this a peace movement and it did take off to a certain extent. In the Scandinavian countries it's still quite strong and it's moved to India and all over the place. My daughter is a doctor and she was working with this very nice Indian girl and she was telling Maureen about this camp she had gone to and this kind of thing. Maureen said 'that sounds very like the camp that my mother went to' so she said 'Mum, I'd love to bring her out to meet you'. So she brought her out and we had dinner together and I actually had a CISV friend visiting at the same time and we walked up and down Sandymount Strand singing the song that we did for the first camp in 1951 and they're still singing the same song. It was quite an interesting experience. Anyway, that's totally irrelevant.
107. MM: Well no, it's not at all, because it is important that there are some positive things to come out of a war, if only to counteract the horror. I started my research thinking that war was a liberating influence for women, which in a very limited way it was, but certainly for Irish women there wasn't much change in infrastructural terms. But there were women who did get to do things they might never have considered otherwise.
108. CH: That's a bit like the maid we had in Newcastle who didn't want to be a maid any more after being in the WAAF [laughs].
109. MM: Yes, exactly, the WAAF particularly because women were nearly on a level footing with men in it but all of those things didn't make a lasting impact in the sense that maybe this law or that law was passed because none of those things happened. But women's perception of themselves changed and I think the sort of thing you're describing, while it might not have sparked a mass movement, the fact that there are people out there advocating tolerance and understanding shows that the lessons they learned have stayed with them.
110. CH: We discussed afterwards that this psychologist in American who started the whole thing off, thought we would all turn into ambassadors or something and we had to relate what we did with our lives at a much later meeting and I always felt that I was a failure because I just got married. I studied geography and a lot of them studied languages and geography and I think the languages and the interest in other countries was partly from the CISV experience. I do think if you can spread tolerance and understanding in your own family, no matter at how low a level, you don't have to be an ambassador to do it. You feel that all you can do is pass it on and hope that they will pass it on to their children.
111. MM: Exactly. Nowadays, I know you've been living here for a long time but do you still keep up the connection with the North?
112. CH: A little bit but not as much, with the Troubles and everything. You're a Southerner, are you?
113. MM: Yes.
114. CH: You see my husband is from Limerick and I think the people in the South, the North didn't enter into their perspective at all. He knew the North was there but he didn't really want to visit it. We always holidayed in West Cork or in Wexford; we didn't really establish that going back at all. We went once or twice, which he enjoyed, and I've been recently with my daughter back to Coney Island and the house has changed hands, the Gilchrists have sold the farmhouse. The people who bought it now are turning the two cottages into holiday homes [laughs]. They're putting in *en suites* and where there were

- five bedrooms there are going to be two bedrooms and there will be two bathrooms. So it's quite interesting and I did promise myself that when they have finished the renovations that I would go back there one weekend and stay in the same house but under different circumstances.
115. MM: I know people couldn't take so many photographs then but do you have any photographs of the cottages during the war?
116. CH: I have some photographs. It's funny but when my house in Newcastle was emptied out, of course there's only so much that you can bring with you, but I did come across some photographs of somebody feeding the hens. I must look them out.
117. MM: Especially for the before and after [both laugh].
118. CH: But of course now they have all these regulations; you can't have a doorway opening on to a main road. She was very nice, the lady who is doing up the houses, she brought me in and showed me around and I actually drew her up a little plan of the way they used to be. She was quite interested.
119. MM: Of course there wouldn't have been any traffic on the road then, or at least very little.
120. CH: Not at all.
121. MM: I know you would have been extremely young in 1941 but was there a consciousness in your family, maybe reflected in the later stories, of the bombing of Belfast?
122. CH: Oh yes, I think that was when we moved. I always remember my mother saying that when they started to bomb Belfast that they decided to move. Now Lisburn wasn't that close to Belfast but it was close enough. Certainly, my grandmother was delighted that my aunt had got a job in a country school rather than in a school in the city.
123. MM: You were saying earlier that your grandmother worried about where your aunt would live, so it was the physical security she was concerned about not about being a young woman on her own?
124. CH: I wouldn't know really. I suppose she could have gone into digs but it would have been quite lonely. It just seemed to solve the problem at the time but obviously you wouldn't have expected to have been there any length of time. Nobody had any idea of how long the war would go on. Then one of my mother's brothers, who was a doctor, he went and joined up in the British army and he went right through the Normandy landings in the Medical Corps and they were terribly worried about him. It must have been very worrying.
125. MM: I'm sure there was constant anxiety especially as the Gilchrist son had been killed. I'm sure that would have added to the stress of the situation.
126. CH: It really wasn't a happy time at all.
127. MM: Well, thank you very much for speaking to me about your family's wartime experience. It's been absolutely fascinating.