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Interviewee's First Name(s) Ruth	Interviewee's Gender Female
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Mother's occupation Housewife	Father's occupation Bearing Distributor (self-employed)
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Úna Gan A Gúna

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Amy: Hello

Ruth: Hi Amy

Amy: Hello Mum. This is Amy Beecher interviewing Ruth Beecher on the 10th of April 2018. Can you confirm that you consent to being involved in this project?

Ruth: Yeah, I've read the information sheet and I consent to being involved.

Amy: Perfect. So, for our first set of interviews, we're focusing on ages 15-29, your experiences during that period of your life. So maybe you could give us an introduction? About where you were born and where you grew up and—

[00.38]

Ruth: Yes. I was born in Cork in the Bon Secours Hospital. And I grew up in Cork in Ballinlough on a housing estate which had the Road, the Grove and the Avenue. Number 27, Silverdale Road. With my Mum and my Dad and my brother [redacted] who is four years younger than me, so I was born in 1968 and he was born in 1972.

Amy: Mhmm. So, when you were fifteen where were you going to school?

Ruth: I was going to school in Ashton which is a— was— is I presume still— a mixed kind of non-denominational school. Or maybe it was Church of Ireland but most schools in Cork were Catholic and this school was mostly Church of Ireland, i.e., Protestant with some Catholics, and I think they had a quota, and then like some atheists and Jehovah's Witnesses and people like that.

Amy: And why did your parents— did your parents choose for you to go there rather than one of the other schools?

Ruth: I wanted to go there myself. Probably mainly because I thought it would be less strict and there would be boys there. And most of the other schools were like single sex Catholic. And also, my— my mum is a Protestant and my Dad's a Catholic and my Mum went to the sort of parent school of Ashton. So, there were two schools there, like a grammar school and



Rochelle which was kind of boarding and day and my Mum went to Rochelle as a day pupil. So, I thought it would be nice to go to the same, sort of, school as my mother had gone to. So, I did an entrance exam and I got a place at Ashton which was like, I was really chuffed about. So ehm— when I was fifteen I was— I think that was 1983, so I would have done my Inter[mediate] Cert[ificate] in the summer in June of 1983. And yeah that meant you finished school like quite early like May/June time, you had exams—

Amy: How did you find school? Did you like the like academic part of it? Did you enjoy it or not?

Ruth: I think aged fifteen I was like still pretty academic so I did well in my Inter Cert, like I got a couple of As and mostly Bs and ehm— but I was starting to get diverted into more exciting things than school work if you know what I mean like I was really into drama at school. I was terrible at sport but I was into drama and I was starting to get picked for school plays and things like that. And go to rehearsals after school and that kind of thing and then that summer that I was fifteen, like I think that year that I was in— we called it the third year, I guess you would've called it year nine? Ehm, yeah I was just like starting to get really into music and books. And get a lot more confident and a lot more popular. I'd been quite the quiet person in school, so I kind of lost— I was never that totally academic, I was like clever enough to get by on non-technical subjects but not very dedicated you might say.

Amy: Mm. And did you make most of your friends at school? Like did you like did you meet people doing plays or from your classes or—?

[04.27]

Ruth: So, from my year I would say. So, in the first year I knew nobody going to Ashton from primary school. All my friends were going somewhere else. And my mum's friend Ethel, her niece was going to go to Ashton so like they paired us up in effect. So, in the first year, her name was Tanya [redacted], and I used to hang around with her in the first year and I was pretty quiet I think I made maybe one other friend, Janet [redacted], who wanted to be a ballerina. And then in the second year I started to make friends with the people who are still my friends so Ailsa, my best friend. And another friend of ours, Stefanie [redacted] who was Dutch, and— and you know, some other people. And then by, so— but in the summers we



used to go to Garryvoe, which is in East Cork— It is like a sea— a lovely long strand with a hotel and caravan parks, we had a caravan there. And so, I started to meet other— I had already started to meet other friends down there. So, my other best friend I met at the seaside when I was younger. And she— and I used to— like from the age of about thirteen or fourteen, we used to also meet in town [Cork city] every Saturday and walk around town looking at all the talent, which is like all the good-looking boys. And so— from fifteen I started to make more friends outside of school. And actually, from fourteen we started to go the pub so—

Amy: Oh really? [Laughs]

Ruth: Yeah [laughs]. So, we met like a lot of people then outside of school.

Amy: Umhm. So, it was easier to drink underage than it is in London? [Laughs]

Ruth: It was then. I don't know—

Amy: About now.

Ruth: That it is now, yeah. So, you just got your birth cert and you photocopied your birth cert and then you tip-exed out the date, and then you typed in a new date and then you photocopied it again, then you just carried that around.

Amy: You carried your birth certificate around with you or—?

Ruth: Well just if you were challenged like—

Amy: [Laughs]

Ruth: I mean, you know, if you started to get challenged, you'd carry it around with you.

Amy: Yeah, [laughs], oh my God. So that summer you were fifteen did you spend that in Garryvoe?

[06.28]



Ruth: I was in a lot of trouble sometime around— I was in trouble because I had this friend— so Norma my friend from Garryvoe lived in Montenotte and she had another friend called Debbie and I became friends with Debbie and my parents were in Garryvoe and we had two boys back to the house. And my neighbour, who lived on the right-hand side of our house, who would have had to come out of her house, cross the road, to look at what was happening in our house in the middle of the night [laughs], obviously did that.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: And then so I came out of school one day and I was meeting Debbie [redacted], she'd walked out from town to our school, and my Dad was in the car, and he took me home and basically chased me around the living room with his belt. He didn't actually hit me with it but he did literally chase me around the living room [laughs].

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: [Laughs]. Because we'd had boys in the house overnight. Nothing happened.

Amy: Who were the boys?

Ruth: They were just these two boys that used to walk around town, and they like— we thought they were very good looking, they were a little bit older than us, like if we were fifteen but they weren't old like. They were probably nineteen or eighteen or something. And I don't know— they wore trendy coats and they had spikey hair—

Amy: Oh, I see.

Ruth: And we thought they were really good looking. Actually, later on we figured they might have been gay, they weren't particularly interested in girls.

Amy: Oh really?

Ruth: Yeah.

Amy: So really nothing did happen? [Laughs]



Ruth: Nothing happened, no, nothing happened at all. But anyway we got absolutely massacred so that was— so I think after that I was probably maybe did go to Garryvoe that summer, but I had been like— yeah from that point forward or around that point I was often in the house [in Ballinlough] on my own in the summer as well so that was good for like parties or staying out late or whatever.

Amy: Why was that?

Ruth: Because Mum and Dad and [redacted] went to Garryvoe.

Amy: Oh, I see you were in the house in Cork on your own.

Ruth: Yeah so it was good for socialising, yeah.

Amy: So, is that what you— would you have parties?

[08.26]

Ruth: Yeah, we had some house parties, yeah.

Amy: You'd invite people from school and people from town and—?

Ruth: No, we'd just go to the pub and everybody would come back to my house.

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: They weren't like organised parties, they were just a lot of people would end up at your house—

Amy: Closing time

Ruth: — you'd need to make sure there wasn't too many like—That kind of thing. We didn't have loads, but we definitely had, sometimes, yeah. It was good.

Amy: So, were— your parents, were they strict then when you were growing up? Were there other belt chasing incidents [laughs] or was that the main event?



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[09.00]

Ruth: There were definitely other incidents— ehm— but probably they all happened when I was— mostly happened, when I was fourteen, fifteen, around that age. And then it was more like, if we know where you are and you tell us you're not going to be home until whenever then that's fine, sort of thing. It was a little bit more relaxed. They were definitely more relaxed than other people's parents, yeah.

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: Yeah.

Amy: You had more freedom?

Ruth: I had more freedom in a way, yeah.

Amy: Umhm. Why do you think fourteen, fifteen was the— the peak?

Ruth: I just started to drink and stay out and—

Amy: And boys were an issue then—

Ruth: I think my Dad got a kick out of it, so when I was fourteen, I met this guy called Martin [redacted] who was actually one of your Dad's best friends —

Amy: The one with the jumpers?

Ruth: Jumpers yeah, mohair jumpers, he was kind of punky. And actually, Norma really fancied him so she used to like go, "oh look there's Martin [redacted]" when we were walking up and down [St] Patrick's Street. But one day I'd gone home from town on a Saturday— it was a lovely sunny day, and Norma rang me, she was like, "I'm in a phone box with Martin [redacted] and he wants to ask you on a date" and I was like—

Amy: Oh my God—



Ruth: —like oh my God, this is awkward. So that was like, my first sort of date, he wanted me to go to see— to the pictures and so you know, I said to Dad, "Dad, ehm, a boy has asked me to go the pictures." And he was like "okay, yeah, that's fine" and I said, "oh you know but he's a punk, is that ok?" And he was like, "yeah that's fine." He thought it was very funny so—

Amy: Oh my God so—

Ruth: Yeah. Like yeah, I had— Martin [redacted] was my boyfriend when I was fourteen for a while and then I met this guy called Tony [redacted] who was 23, I think.

Amy: When you were fifteen?

Ruth: Yeah.

Amy: Wooo—

Ruth: He— and he'd just broken up with a woman who was like in her twenties so where— if I went anywhere and— all of her friends would go like, "oh look at her, she's so young" and blah blah blah—

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: Yeah. I think he was probably a very, very annoying person. But at the time I thought he was—

Amy: Did you find it exciting because he was—

Ruth: He was very tall and handsome and he was in a in a play in the some— one of the arts centres so like basically the first time I met him Martin [redacted] walked me to the bus stop to get the last bus home and I got on the bus and he sat beside me and he has his play script and everything.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: — and he was like, quite— you know what I mean?



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Amy: An art boy.

Ruth: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Amy: So how long did you go out with him for?

Ruth: Not long, a few months, And then— So that would have been— I don't know, eighty— ok so sometime in '83— and then in the autumn it was the Inter Cert results. The Inter Cert results came out and we were all told, “make sure you stay in school” so we immediately all bunked off and then we all got suspended [laughs].

Amy: Oh no!

Ruth: We only went into town like. It was— Anyway, my Dad got called in—

Amy: What on results day?

Ruth: Yeah, on results day we bunked off.

Amy: Oh, they make you stay?

Ruth: Yeah, they made you.

Amy: They don't even try and make us stay, you come in and collect them and leave, because they know.

Ruth: Yeah, but they did anyway. And ehm— they called my Dad in and said to my Dad, did he think I had mental health problems? [laughs]

Amy: Because you bunked off?

Ruth: I don't know maybe it was something that the deputy head had wanted to say to my family for a while.

Amy: For a while

Ruth: — you know what I mean, I don't know.



Amy: What do you think he would have observed that prompted him to say that?

Ruth: I don't know. I was very attention seeking and I was like— very like— it was like, obviously it was the fashion of the time to be quite depressed , you know it was the '80s, it was like it was New Wave and—

Amy: Romantic melancholic or whatever—

Ruth: Kind of yeah, but also, I was kind of like a— a strange person. I was quite outgoing but also you know my parents were— didn't have a good marriage. My mother was not very happy, so she put a lot of I— like, until I was so— I think around fourteen— fifteen, I shared a bedroom with my Mum for years, so— It was only when they converted the attic when I was about fourteen that I got my own bedroom. So, it was a lot of looking after Mum, she was very moody and like you'd have to tiptoe around her sometimes. And then other times she'd be really lovely, and she was very supportive, and I think partly I got a lot of freedom because they sort of felt guilty or— you know what I mean?

[13.19]

Amy: So, did they always sleep in separate rooms? Was it always that sleeping arrangement that you remembered? Like did you share with your Mum from when you were little until that age or—?

Ruth: I really can't remember. I know that from— definitely from early secondary school like— yeah, I was sharing with Mum and the story was that Dad snored very badly sort of thing—

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: — that was the cover story. So, she couldn't sleep.

*Amy: But you were not— you knew that was not— or you— Or did you buy it at the time or—
?*



Ruth: No, no, no. She talked a lot about the marriage, and you know, all of her problems and yeah, she was like very needy.

Amy: So, what was— yeah, you say they didn't have a good relationship, how— could you expand on that like?

[14.04]

Ruth: Ehm, uh— my Dad's very sociable, I think, or he's very gregarious, he goes out a lot, he used to drink a lot, he had— he played hockey, ehm— he had a lot of work sort of social things. Eh, he— like he'd go to the pub with his mates every Friday and Mum— and like I think when they were younger there were like dinner dances and that sort of thing like with his sisters or whatever. They'd all ended by the time, mostly ended by the time I was old enough to really notice. But anyway, Mum basically hated going out, hated going on holiday, she like— would like— if we were going on holiday in July, she'd start to like be stressed about it when it was booked in March or something. And it was just like— so everything was quite difficult, you know what I mean? And so, eventually they came to a kind of a— some kind of an accommodation with each other, around the mid-teens for me, where they kind of had separate lives but then they had a very good relationship about certain things, like we'd go out for tea every week. You know, we'd go to a restaurant and all— the four of us, me and [redacted] and Mum and Dad, and have a nice meal and they got on quite well it was like they decided they weren't— I don't know— they just accommodated to each other. Ehm—

Amy: Did you get the impression that it was like that— that it had always been like that? Like that Granny was always anti-social or whatever you choose to call it, or that it was something— that there was a change? Like, and why did they get married? Like I suppose I don't really understand like the social situation and that at the time, but do you get the impression like they got married like because they loved each other, and they got on well? Or like— and then something changed, or?

[16.09]

Ruth: Ehm, I don't really know why they got married. I'd say they did fall in love. I mean, she was 31 or something when they met, she was quite old for a person of that— at that time. She



got pregnant before they were married but they were engaged so they would've got married anyway, they didn't get married because she was pregnant, as far as I know. Ehm, and then after she had me in 1968, she had like a massive breakdown and was hospitalized and it might have been post-natal depression but also, her mother had committed suicide when she was 21 and nobody'd ever talked about that so that was ten years later, sort of thing, you know what I mean? Ehm, so I guess I— I really don't know. Maybe they sort of accommodated each other more when they were just married, and then I think my mum's post-natal depression, and then I don't know— I think they thought they wouldn't have another baby and then they had [redacted] and I think that was a better experience for her, but she didn't really get on well with my Dad's family. She didn't get on with them at all in fact, she never felt like she was welcomed into the family. But also, she probably wasn't very— you know, she found them too much. So, she probably wasn't very friendly to them and yeah, it was just all very difficult. Yeah, so I think they had a few years then of really not getting on and my Dad raging at her and her raging back and then they kind of calmed down when, as I say, around that time when I was around fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. I actually thought my Mum would leave him at that point in time—.

Amy: Did you? Mm.

Ruth: And I was really, really bitterly disappointed then when she didn't. She kind of seemed to come out of herself and I thought— I thought he was holding her back, and it wasn't until quite a few years later that I realised, that's maybe not exactly what's happened here. Do you see what I mean?

Amy: Yeah.

Ruth: But also, I thought he was unreasonable like— I thought he drank too much, he was always going out, but actually it— she must have really been really hard to live with as a partner as well as a Mum if you see what I mean. So yeah, it's hard to know, my Dad would never really talk about it and obviously Mum would have her own opinions about it.

Amy: And so, she leaned on you a lot for like emotional support?



Ruth: She leaned on me a lot. And then, she had a kind of a time when I was in my teens around this fifteen to sort of seventeen where she actually like— my friends would come back to the house a lot, she'd drive us around, she liked a lot of the music we liked, she kind of enjoyed the company of younger people and she didn't really enjoy Dad's company or his friends, she thought they were stupid, which they kind of— some of them were very male chauvinist and all of that. So, she kind of came out of herself but then— yeah, I had to decide then whether to leave Cork and that was very hard to leave— but then I left, and she was fine.

Amy: Yeah.

Ruth: You know what I mean? But it was like— yeah it was a big consideration. Yeah.

[19.12]

Amy: What age were you when you left?

Ruth: Ehm, twenty.

Amy: Twenty. So, what made you decide to go? Were your were your friends moving and—?

Ruth: Ehm, well, I had been seeing your Dad off and on since I was fifteen so I think we'd met in the s— well I must have met him wh— I did meet him when I was fourteen because I met him when— when I was going out with Martin Lucey, I— I met him outside the Queen's Old Castle [shopping centre], where he was buying hamster food for Martin [redacted]'s hamster.

Amy: [Laughs]

Ruth: Ziggy, the hamster. Named after Ziggy Stardust, David Bowie. And then I met him again at the Inter— when we went to the Inter Cert like results night, there was a dance at Spyderys Disco—

Amy: Spiders [Laughs]

Ruth: Spyderys, S-P-Y, I believe.



Amy: Ohhh.

Ruth: And ehm, so I went with Martin [redacted] and he went with a— a girl who became a friend then, Elaine [redacted], and ehm, yeah, and then the following year I— we met up again and that was, yeah, that was 1984— early in 1984 I think.

Amy: Mm, so was it like, these early relationships that you had it sounds very like— I was about to say equivocal but I think I think I'm using that word wrong— Like it seemed from the way you describe it like, you were seeing people and then you weren't, but like at the time did you experience it—

Ruth: Oh yeah.

Amy: Did you have like drama?

Ruth: Oh, major drama.

Amy: Did you have like heartbreaks and—

Ruth: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Amy: And crushes and— you know?

Ruth: Yeah.

Amy: The highs and the lows.

Ruth: It was all very exciting and very dramatic, yeah, definitely, definitely.

[21.07]

Amy: And what were you all doing about like, contraception and that?

Ruth: Okay, so I didn't sleep with Martin [redacted]. I think we messed around, if you know what I mean. And I didn't sleep with Tony— [redacted].

Amy: Art Boy.



Ruth: Theatre boy. I think he was at college and he— he— I remember he was writing this essay about Rousseau, in French, “man is born in chains but sets himself free” [laughs].

[Note: It was actually “man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains” so the joke is on me...].

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: In French [laughs].

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: [Laughs]. You can imagine—

Amy: Irresistible

Ruth: — what my Dad made of him, right? Ehm, so, yeah, kind of messed around. I didn't sleep— I don't think I slept with anyone properly until your Dad. And that wasn't straight away like. So yeah— so— but it was quite— it was quite messy from the start because I think— I can't remember— like we broke up and got together a few times so— Anyway, we were somewhere, your Dad walked me home, we kissed, we were sort of together, and the— I mean we were together in the way you are when you're very young if you know what I mean. And then we went— me and Ailsa and Stephanie went on a school tour to Holland and I got off with somebody else from school. It was actually somebody I never would have ever— it was just one of those things, you're away. And then, I think, yeah— then, I don't know—

Amy: How did you feel? Were you like, "oh no," or were you?

Ruth: I wasn't sure, I think— I think I wasn't sure at all, yeah. So, there were a few “on again, off agains” like that, and then we were on for a quite a long time and—

Amy: What like months or—?



Ruth: Yeah I think like eighteen months or— Quite a long time. Yeah. And we had like a couple of really, really glorious years, like sixteen, seventeen. I don't know, it was just a lot of bands, music, going on trips—

Amy: *Where did you go on trips?*

Ruth: We went down to West Cork, we went to like—

Amy: *Nice.*

Ruth: Kenmare, we went to Schull, we just got drunk and yeah, it was just like a really, really good time. Everybody was talking about books and music and going to second hand shops and buying like singles and clothes and it was just, yeah, a really fabulous time, really great— and we had like a really big group of very lovely friends like we had, I had friends my own age and then I had friends in their early twenties sort of thing, so it was quite a wide group and yeah it was just really, really fun. And then, I think— Your Dad was in a band, and I was in a band. Your Dad was in a band for longer than me and then I was in a kind of much more novelty band, if you know what I mean. And I don't know exactly what happened, but everything got very cliquey, if you know what I mean, in different groups and there was lots of fallings out. And then I— I kind of— I— I fell in love with Dave who was in my band and like really sort of, yeah— just like embarrassed your Dad by getting off with him in a— sort of in a like a bar or something like that. It was really hurtful, and I went out with Dave for a while, and then your Dad and I got back together—.

And I think then from about— I think around the sort of [age of] nineteen, oh so I left school— I did my leaving cert, did okay, like, not great. Left school. Didn't really know what I wanted to do. I was working in a clothes shop for a while. Did a secretarial course, had a terrible job in a garage in Carrigtwohill and— yeah, it just got like, I— I— I think I really wanted to leave but I kind of kept breaking up with your Dad? It was more for something to do because I wasn't quite able to leave, if you know what I mean. And like, the last year that I was there, I think like— some of— all of— Anyway, your dad and I broke up, I think that would have been 1987 or 1988. And so, the last few years in Cork was like literally, quite heavy drinking and just like getting off with loads of people, not loads of people but a few



different people, and it just wasn't very enjoyable. And, yeah, people were starting to use different drugs and I wasn't really into all of that and—

Amy: Like what?

Ruth: Well, I think, just like, maybe cocaine— and just smoking a lot of weed. And people would just go off into rooms, if you know what I mean, I was never in the rooms—

Amy: [Laughs]

Ruth:— so I didn't quite know what was going on but— It was all— it just all became—

Amy: Changed the atmosphere.

Ruth: It changed the atmosphere. And a friend of ours— a friend of ours and especially your Dad's, his girlfriend was kind of quite cliquey— And then there was a lot of drama because she got pregnant and hid the pregnancy and I didn't know about that for a long time—

Amy: Mm, why?

Ruth: Why did she hide it? Well, they didn't want to keep the baby and they had the baby adopted like.

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: Yeah, so very few people knew that she was pregnant. I didn't know until very late in the day. I felt really guilty then about thinking she was a— not a very nice person, because obviously she'd been going through a lot of stuff you know. So—

[27.21]

Amy: Because she couldn't get an abortion?

Ruth: Well, she wouldn't have been able to get an abortion [in Ireland]. Or she may not have wanted to. I mean I— I think she— she— she came to London to— for the last sort of period of the pregnancy and gave the baby up for abo—for adoption, so I guess maybe she could



have done that earlier and had an abortion but maybe she didn't— I mean a lot of people didn't believe in it even for themselves even if they— even if they felt that it— they were pro-choice, they would think that they wouldn't want to do it, if you know what I mean?

Amy: Yeah, yeah.

Ruth: I don't remember whether we ever talked about it. But yeah, so there was a lot of different people knew different things and just people were just— you know. I guess it's a really small town and there were a lot of “big fish” and big egos there, and people in bands and so they were always falling out with each other and that kind of thing. We still had a very good laugh and did loads of stuff. But I was getting like really— I was just drinking way too much and getting quite— I mean I am quite dramatic— melodramatic person anyway so it just wasn't that good for me. And then Ailsa left in 1988. She came to London. So, I stuck it out for another year and then I came to London in '89, March '89. And I just said to everyone like, "I'm going to London for six months, see you in six months, or I might stay." Because I thought, oh I'll have a safety net, I won't be— it won't be embarrassing if I come back.

Amy: If you go back. Yeah, you're not like "I'm emigrating" and then you're like "hello it's me again."

Ruth: Yeah. So—

Amy: How did your family—?

Ruth: And your Dad had started going out with somebody else, you know, the famous Suzanne—

Amy: Suzanne.

Ruth: Yeah, for about a year or two years maybe even before, so that was really difficult for me because even though obviously it was all over for us kind of thing, it was just really hard to— you'd go into a bar, they'd be there— I was still friendly with Eve and Kim so it was just like awkward basically. So yeah, so London then.

[29.26]



Amy: And your family, what did they think when you moved? Like were they fine with you moving? Were they— like how did—?

Ruth: I think they were fine.

Amy: — your Mum and Dad feel about it?

Ruth: I— I was very worried about my Mum, but she held up stoically and sent me letters about everyday for— you know.

Amy: What was yours and [brother]'s relationship like when you were teenagers?

Ruth: We didn't have that much to do with each other.

Amy: No.

Ruth: Four years is—

Amy: I feel like with that age gap, and if you're the opposite genders, that's often the way.

Ruth: Yeah, so I would— I didn't really, you know— he used to just storm around a lot is my recollection.

Amy: [Laughs] Was he an angry teen?

Ruth: He was kind of like, yeah, he just was a bit awkward. He— I think he used to play like Dungeons and Dragons or some things like that and he had his own mates and, yeah, we didn't cross over that much so I didn't really know him that well.

Amy: So, there was no tearful farewell?

Ruth: No, with [brother]? No, definitely not, no.

[30.25]

Amy: So where did you move to when you went to London? What time of year was it when you moved?



Ruth: March, and I moved in with Ailsa in a flat in Gowlett Road, SE—

Amy: Gowlett Road?

Ruth: Yeah.

Amy: The Gowlett Arms, I like The Gowlett Arms,

Ruth: Yeah, we used to go to The Gowlett Arms a few— few times.

Amy: [Laughs].

Ruth: So, it was basically, I forget what number it was, but it was a— it was the upstairs, like the first floor flat. And she lived with Stella, Joe [redacted], Catherine [redacted]— was there somebody else? Nobody I can think of at the moment. And— so all Cork people. Me and Ailsa shared a bedroom.

Amy: Mm, was it cheap then? Did you save before you moved, what did you do like?

Ruth: I— my parents always used to give me money.

Amy: Oh really? [Laughs]

Ruth: Yeah, but I— I think I had saved. I mean I was working all the time so. And basically, I think I had enough like to sort of— I needed to get a job within a month and I— I did do that. But obviously I was nervous that I wouldn't. It was very kind of like— I think Ailsa was working as a nursing assistant in the Maudsley, Joe [redacted] was working at the Guardian selling advertising, Stella was temping— secretarial. I don't remember what Ca [redacted] was doing. And like, it was just a very typical shared house with people stealing each other's food and complaining about smelly feet and they had a— they used to go to Irish pubs and stuff which—

Amy: Did they go to The Swan?

Ruth: Well, I even went to The Swan once. But it wasn't for me, do you know what I mean? I said to Ailsa "I did not come to London to sit in an Irish pub."



Amy: To be on like the scene.

Ruth: You wouldn't be seen dead— dead in an Irish pub and talking to people. I had wanted to come to London like to go to, you know, gigs and like 'The Tube' [music tv show on channel 4] used to broadcast sometimes from like the Town and Country club as it was then, the Forum [in Kentish Town], and I was like, "oh I want to be there," you know what I mean? It's all happening. The bands are there. And like everybody looks fantastic - their clothes and their hair and their make-up and everything so— No, I didn't come to like— So, they used to all go to the pub and I like used to sit in the flat listening to pirate radio stations—

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: [Laughs]. Dancing around like whatever. I really— you know— bit weird. And then the flat downstairs became free so me and Ailsa rented that flat—

Amy: Oh nice. How much was the rent?

Ruth: I think it was, I want to say £200 each a month so—

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: So, like £400 a month.

Amy: The dream—

Ruth: But I was only paid something like £8000 a year.

Amy: Wow, that's nothing.

Ruth: I think, in my first job. And Ailsa had fallen— Ailsa had been crazy about this guy at work for about, I don't know, six months before I got to London, and I think something ludicrous like the night before I arrived in London she got off with this guy.

Amy: Oh right.



Ruth: And then they were madly in love, so it was like really— it became really tedious. Because every time I'd go home, he would be there, or else she would be going to his place or whatever. So that was like quite difficult and then after— I don't know how long, a year or nine months or something, she decided to move in with him.

Amy: Oh, did she?

Ruth: Yeah, so she moved in with him. He lived in Stepney in a—

Amy: What?

Ruth: It was a flat a bit like this actually but in a— on the Ocean Estate, which was a little bit rough. And— but I was glad at that point in time because—

Amy: Because it was so— insufferable.

Ruth: It was so— she was so— they were both annoying me so much, you know, very difficult.

[34.06]

Ruth: Yeah so then I got a flat mate from 'Loot Magazine.'

Amy: [Laughs] Did you? The back pages.

Ruth: And she was kind of bonkers but nice, yeah.

Amy: So, what was the first job you got when you moved to London?

Ruth: It was for the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association. And it was right in the middle of Westminster looking over— the back of the building looked of St. James's Park. It was like a secretarial PA type job. They had this massive IBM computer, it was like, bigger than this table. And like, it was like, you know those huge like multifunctional photocopiers?

Amy: Oh yeah.



Ruth: It was way bigger than that.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: And every computer in the building was like cabled together so if one cable broke all the computers in the line would go off. They weren't PCs they were like computers [monitors] connected to this thing. And so, I started to— I started to do other things like some finance stuff and to start learning how to run this computer thing. So, I was there for— from 1989 to '93 I think.

Amy: Were you?

Ruth: I had you while I was there. And yeah. It was quite a—

Amy: Mmm. That's a long time.

Ruth: Yeah, it was quite a— it was very conservative obviously. Lots of colonels and generals. And brigadiers and—.

Amy: Did you have to dress conservatively?

Ruth: Yes. Yeah, I used to wear like skirts suits.

Amy: Skirt suits.

Ruth: And, yeah.

Amy: I was going to say skirt suits [laughs.]

Ruth: I— I don't think I did forever there— I'm— I wore— I think I wore trousers, but you wouldn't wear jeans and things like that. And then while we were there, we moved from Westminster where they rented the building to a— like one— would have been one of the early warehouse conversions at Tower Bridge. And so that they refurbished that whole building and we moved there, so I was at Tower Bridge then for a few years. And yeah, I had you, they had a car park, so I was able to drive you to Aunty Claire's to be looked after. So, I'd drive from like Tulse Hill, back to— like over to Wandsworth Common and then I'd drive



back around the South Circular to Tower Bridge every day. Then go and do it again in the evening. But it was quite handy when you were young.

[36.24]

Amy: So, if you've had me, we've definitely skipped.

Ruth: Oh yeah, we skipped a lot of stuff, didn't we?

Amy Umhm [laughs].

Ruth: Yeah.

Amy: So how did that happen?

Ruth: So, 1991 then it would have been, in the— around the April— your Dad was in the Power of Dreams [band], had been for a few years. And they were playing somewhere in— so they were playing at the World's End in Camden. And me and Ailsa were going to see— I want to say De La Soul, but it wasn't De La Soul— I think it was the Jungle Brothers in the Town and Country Club. And so, we went to that and then we knew that your Dad was going to be— is that right? No. No. The night before that, the Power of Dreams were playing in Notting Hill—

Amy: Ok.

Ruth: In— I forget what the club is, but you'd know it if I said it. It's still there, I think. So, we went to see them there, and I think we talked to Bunty after the gig, I don't think we saw your Dad— And Bunty said to us, "oh we're going to be at the World's End tomorrow night." Were they playing there or were they just going there after something? I don't really know but he—

Amy: What made you decide like to go at all? Like were your friends going, like did you—

Ruth: To the place where your Dad would be?

Amy: Or to the gig, either, both.



Ruth: To the gig [pause]. Well, I would have wanted to see your Dad. I mean we— I think we probably would have gone to see anybody we had known anyway play in London if you know what I mean. But I definitely wanted to see your Dad, and actually they didn't know we were there, so it was quite nice to be just standing there watching them. Keith and Craig had a big fight on the stage also—

Amy: Did they?

Ruth: Yeah, so I think— yeah, like Keith knocked over all his drums, and Craig smashed a— it was all very dramatic and yeah.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: They were always fighting, weren't they? Because they were brothers and yeah. So, then the next night we went to the Jungle Brothers and then we went and called to the pub and we were talking to Bunty and— and your Dad. And then we ended up talking for a long time, your Dad and I, had a really good fun, funny, good laugh and really just nice conversation and then, I remember trying to get your Dad to come back to my flat— I was living in this— not that nice a flat in Bermondsey. So, I had been living in Tulse Hill and I was sort of flat sitting for Nicky [redacted] my friend.

Amy: Oh okay.

Ruth: Her and Guy had gone travelling around the world and she offered me her flat to flat sit and like a fool I insisted that they change the tenancy over to me.

Amy: Oh?

Ruth: Because I didn't— if something went wrong while they were away, I didn't want to be left like— not having any right to be there. And needing like something fixed or something. But it was bad because when they came back, the landlord evicted them because they didn't have— they'd lost their tenancy.

Amy: Oh no.



Ruth: Yeah, anyway, they were very good about it. But after that, this friend of— friend of a friend— was travelling and sh— her flat in Bermondsey, she was looking for someone to rent, so I rented that. It was peach, literally peach, it was very like this flat in terms of shape, if you know what I mean. But it was just one bedroom, and it was peach, and it had a peach leather couch and then up on the top on the wall, you know what do they call those things? The pan— little panel of wallpaper that goes around the top?

Amy: I know what you mean.

Ruth: It had peaches on it.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: Yeah. And so, I was there, and I remember that night trying to persuade your Dad to come back and stay there and he was like, "no, I can't because we're going somewhere tomorrow, blah, blah, blah— come back to the hotel." So, we went back to this hotel in Bayswater and I stayed the night, and then in the morning there was a lot of like [squirring noise] as I walked out through reception and everybody was like— various people from Cork were there like.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: — knowing the history and whatever. But that was April and then I heard nothing from your father whatsoever, between April and—

Amy: When?

Ruth: June, I think.

Amy: Did you try and contact him?

Ruth: I think I sent him a really— I know I sent him a really rude letter.

Amy: Did you?

Ruth: Yeah, I was—



Amy: What did the letter say?

Ruth: I was quite— I was quite— I was just— I was just really prone to writing angry letters when I was young. Like they tried to be funny but also to—

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: I— I can't tell, it was just too embarrassing. It was like, you know, basically like—

Amy: What did it say?

[41.26]

Ruth: Something about not contacting me—

Amy: Right, right.

Ruth: But, you know, couched in about— Anyway I just ca— It's too embarrassing to talk about but— But I definitely would have sent him that.

Amy: Umhm. I can't believe you had to do your letter. Like, you're lucky he didn't have a mobile.

Ruth: But I didn't actually know where he was, if you see what I mean, he was touring with the Power of Dreams.

Amy: So where did you send the letter?

Ruth: To Greenwood [his parents' house].

Amy: To Greenwood [laughs].

Ruth: In fact, Eve read some of my letters she confessed many years later [laughs].

Amy: Oh really?

Ruth: Because she was sleeping in that room and she found them in them in a drawer.



Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: I was like "You didn't!" Oh my God. So then—

[41.56]

Amy: So wh— So when you'd like— In April or whatever, did you, you wanted to get back together or what? Or you didn't know but you wanted to be in contact anyway?

Ruth: No, I think I did.

Amy: Want to get back together?

Ruth: And I think your Dad probably didn't.

Amy: What happened to Suzanne?

Ruth: She was gone by then.

Amy: Oh okay.

Ruth: So, when they were going out together and then your Dad got the call from the Power of Dreams to say they were looking for a guitarist, they stayed together for a while after that but then I think he broke it off with her.

Amy: Oh okay.

Ruth: Because he was away a lot and it wasn't, you know—

Amy: Umhm.

Ruth: So, then the June, me and my flatmate and my ex-flatmate— I forget which was which now but Maxine [redacted] who was this friend of mine from Newcastle, and Sarah [redacted] who I used to live with, went to Cork. We drove in Sarah's car; we went on the ferry. And your Dad was there, so we hooked up at Greenwood— I believe that's when you were conceived—



Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February, yeah. So, yeah.

Amy: At Greenwood, oh my God, I've never known that—

Ruth: At Greenwood.

Amy: — when I've been there.

Ruth: You didn't know that?

Amy: No.

Ruth: Okay.

Amy: [Laughs].

[43.11]

Ruth: And so then—

Amy: Wait, how did it happen?

Ruth: It was just like—

Amy: Did you practise safe sex?

Ruth: — irresponsible. No.

Amy: No?

Ruth: No.

Amy: Is it true what you used to say to me, that that's your only indiscretion?

Ruth: Yes.



Úna Gan A Gúna

Irish women's oral histories

Amy: It's true?

Ruth: Yes.

Amy: Oh my God. Terrifying. [Laughs]

Ruth: Yeah, I think like, a— When we later decided to have Alice, which is out of this time period, I know— Like, as soon as we decided, yeah, we're going to have another baby, boom.

Amy: Oh really?

Ruth: Yeah. So—

Amy: You must be—

Ruth: I think it's very—

Amy: Very fertile. [Laughs].

Ruth: Not now, obviously. Ehm, but— yeah. I don't know which side of the family that comes from.

Amy: Mm. Good to know

Ruth: Yeah. So. That was June. And then I didn't see your Dad again for another few months.

Amy: Mm.

Ruth: Sent another letter [laughs].

Amy: Mm. Di— when you sent the second letter did you know you were pregnant?

Ruth: Yes.

Amy: [Gasps].

Ruth: And I was like— I was like—



Amy: So how did you find out? What happened when you found out you were pregnant? How did you find out you were pregnant?

[44.18]

Ruth: I think my period didn't come and I just did a pregnancy test.

Amy: Umhm. Where were you when you did it?

Ruth: Well I did one in the flat, and— in London, I was in London all the time— And I also went to— would have been Guy's Hospital to have a proper pregnancy test done. And the lady was laughing at me. She was like, "what? you've done one at home? Well they're better than ours, ours are NHS!"

Amy: Oh my God [laughs]

Ruth: Like they're— you know, yours will tell you— Because I— anyway I can't remember whether hers said positive or negative but yeah, she said the home one is more sensitive than the NHS ones, which I had no idea about of course. So—

Amy: And did you tell people? Did you tell like a friend or—

Ruth: I definitely would have told Ailsa. And the few friends that were— yeah, the few friends that were around.

Amy: Did you know that you like wanted to have a bab— have the baby, have me?

Ruth: Totally, yeah. Never considered not having the baby. And I was really adamant like— I don't— it doesn't matter to me whether Ian wants to be a part of the baby's life or not. Obviously, he needs to know but I'm still gonna have the baby et cetera.

[45.42]

Amy: Did you know before that that you really— that that would have been your decision or did it— was it like instinctive when you knew you were pregnant?



Ruth: I think I like— yeah, I— I— I knew before. I— I would have wanted a baby. Not actively, but—

Amy: Possibly [laughs].

Ruth: There was no— it was not— like I didn't have sex with your Dad without any contraception because I wanted to have— to get pregnant.

Amy: No, no, no.

Ruth: Absolutely not. But I would have often thought about having a baby. If you know what I mean. So yeah, so then I— I rang Greenwood at some stage. Because I had no idea where your Dad was. Turned out he was in Bath making an album.

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: So eventually a letter got to your Dad, and we met up and I told him.

Amy: Did you say— did the letter say that you were pregnant?

Ruth: No, asked to meet up.

Amy: Right.

Ruth: So, we met downstairs in a pub in Chinatown in a bar called— No, we didn't. We were going to meet downstairs, but we didn't because it closed. So, we met upstairs in a— in a pub in Chinatown, I think it's gone now or called something else. And I told him.

Amy: How did he react?

Ruth: [Pause]. Quietly.

Amy: [Laughs].

Ruth: He wasn't horrified. But I had quite a long speech, you know, made—

Amy: Did you?



Ruth: Yeah [laughs].

Amy: Did you? Yeah. Were you prepared? [Laughs]

Ruth: [Laughs] So I'm not sure how much actually time he would have—

Amy: How much he spoke—

Ruth: How much he could have got a word in. You know, I was like [fast speech noises]. Whatever. And— I think that was the September, and I remember, around my birthday—

Amy: So, you were quite pregnant then?

Ruth: No.

Amy: Quite pregnant is that the right term?

Ruth: No, you weren't due until March.

Amy: Oh okay.

Ruth: So, no.

Amy: No. Three months.

Ruth: July, August, September, I was only three months pregnant. So, in October then, it was my birthday, and we went to see the— I think The Psychedelic Furs, possibly again in the Town and Country Club. And then your Dad came back to my flat as it was at the time. And stayed the night. And then, we were pretty much inseparable after that, it just happened. It was like, oh let's just see how it goes. And there was no— you know— But yeah, it was— yeah— it went— so that was nice. And yeah, then we had you.

Amy: So, when did you tell your family that you were pregnant?

[48.00]



Ruth: Not that late but I found it far more difficult than I had expected to. And we went— I went home, and it was late enough that I was showing I know that. And then we went out to dinner at the— at Jury's. And I told them at the dinner table. And they were like, "oh, I knew something was up and blah, blah, blah."

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: I actually told [my brother] first which was highly unusual.

Amy: Did you?

Ruth: Yeah, yeah.

Amy: Why?

Ruth: I just—

Amy: Or it just happened?

Ruth: No, I just chose— I was like I need to tell Mum and Dad I'm pregnant. He was fine about it; he'd already had his 'illegitimate' child so—

Amy: Oh of course. Yeah, how old were you when that happened?

Ruth: Well, his son was older than you so— So his son must have been born in 1990 or— yeah, so I was 21 maybe.

Amy: So, you were in London?

Ruth: I think must have been in London, yeah.

Amy: Umhm, so I guess you didn't observe at close quarters what was happening?

Ruth: There's probably a lot in Mum's letters over there. There's probably a lot of stuff about that, yeah.

Amy: About that, mm.



Ruth: But I haven't read them again, yeah. Yeah, because he— yeah, his girlfriend got pregnant and her family, I think, strongly blamed [my brother] for it and I think Mum went up to apologise— apologise for [my brother]'s— 'carelessness.'

Amy: Wow.

Ruth: You know they lived at the top of our park. And so—

Amy: I remember where their house is.

Ruth: I think that must have cost her quite a lot to go and do that. And I don't think she got a great reception. I think the dad was trying to be more understanding

Amy: Mm. Conciliatory.

Ruth: And the mum was just raging.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: Yeah so, yeah, so they, yeah went through that, and I think put the baby up for adoption in Dublin then I think. Yeah, so I wasn't there. It wasn't a very real thing to me if you know what I mean.

Amy: Umhm.

Ruth: But yeah—

[50.13]

Amy: So, then they were alright when you told them? That you were pregnant?

Ruth: I think they were a little bit worried about would I have enough money, could I manage and blah, blah, blah. But they were fine, they were like, "oh if you're happy love" and blah, blah, blah. And to be fair to my Mum your Dad was away a lot just after— So he was on tour when— So when we were told that you were gonna need to be a caesarean because you were breech, they booked the date and then your Dad was on tour right up to the date that you were



born. And then, went back on tour within a few days. And my Mum came, and I was in this little flat in Tulse Hill. The flat that— Nicky and Guy's flat. They were away in Australia and she like— just brought me hot cross buns— And cups of tea. And I didn't have a washing machine, she went down to Tulse Hill with all my washing and went to the launderette for me and, you know she was just like, really nurturing and she stayed for probably two or three weeks.

Amy: Mhmm. Was it difficult with Dad away right after? I think— it's hard for me to imagine.

Ruth: Yeah. I was just looking at the dates today and I hadn't realised to be honest that he was away for that period. It may have been that he was coming back like— That he was away for two or three days and— he wasn't in Japan or anywhere—

Amy: Yeah, he was—

Ruth: He was in the UK. So, it was quite possible that it didn't feel that bad because he was coming back.

Amy: It was broken up. Mmm.

Ruth: I was actually like completely overwhelmed when I had you. I didn't know whether I was coming or going. I didn't know what to do with a baby. I was wanting to be a very competent mother but you know obviously everything I ever do I just look in a book and— I had done all my swotting. I had like— I had the pregnancy books out throughout the pregnancy and the new baby books and everything. But it doesn't actually prepare you for an actual baby and like I remember the day— Like the GP called around to check you or whatever. And like— you know, I had to take off your nappy and like pick you up and you just shat all over me—

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: And I was just like [laughs] I just couldn't cope.

Amy: That's horrifying.



Ruth: [Laughing]. I was so— it was really hard. And no sleep and you were quite colic-y in the evenings you used to cry from about seven to eleven or twelve at night. So, when your Dad was there, he used to just walk up and down for hours with you on his shoulder or whatever. So, the first few months were a bit of a blur.

[52.53]

Ruth: It was— yeah, and we went back to Ireland quite shortly after then. And we had this grotty house in Grange [Cork suburb] that we rented off these two weird old people. And it was like, you know, you'd open a cupboard and all the cupboard door would be all rotting away.

Amy: Oh God.

Ruth: And all the furniture was made of things that you'd slide off [laughs].

Amy: Oh no!

Ruth: And every room had the same pattern— swirly pattern carpet but in a different colour. So, like it'd be like mustard swirls in the living room.

Amy: Oh yuck.

Ruth: Like you know the ones that were so swirly they almost had faces in them? And then the next room would be purple swirls, and then the next room would be orange swirls.

Amy: That sounds horrifying.

Ruth: It was not a nice house.

Amy: Were you like worried when you were pregnant or like soon after you had me, knowing that your Mum had had such a hard time after having you?

Ruth: No, because I thought I could do everything better than my Mum. Love, career, having babies, I was going to do it all really easily. Yeah. So, I was not worried about it, no.



Amy: Umhm. You said you—

[53.56]

Ruth: I thought that sheer force of personality could get me through anything at that point in my life, I was very naïve.

Amy: [Laughs] Do you still think that?

Ruth: Huh?

Amy: [Laughs] Do you still think that, I said?

Ruth: Sometimes— But not— not so much.

Amy: Not always.

Ruth: No, I'm not quite as— what's the word?

Amy: I don't know.

Ruth: Like, it's not egotistical but— yeah.

Amy: I know what you mean.

Ruth: I'm more used to things in life now. Then I was just like you know, think the best and it will happen sort of thing, you know what I mean?

Amy: So, you did experience the blues, you said?

Ruth: Yeah but like— I had like— in hospital, on day three I was like— I was just bawling my eyes out in the shower.

Amy: Oh God.

Ruth: I had no idea why I was like— Also I had completely no idea that— you know you have this tight, round belly when you're pregnant—



Amy: Umhm.

Ruth: But nobody like tells you what it's gonna be like when the baby comes out. It's like this huge grey blancmange-y sort of — It's like you're never going to get your own body back. And like, when you're pregnant it's like, you— I felt quite nice—

Amy: Quite nice— mmm.

Ruth: Yeah, attractive and then when I had the baby I was like— I was exhausted— I'd had a caesarian, so I was really sore. I just felt like I— I just felt completely out of— I didn't know what was really happening to me. So yeah. And then once I got home, I wasn't down. But I was quite an anxious parent. So, I apologise for that, because that probably affected you. But I—

Amy: Made me the anxious child that I am today—

Ruth: But I think it's like a lot of first children are anxious because parents are very anxious, aren't they? So, like my Mum said to me— You know my Mum is like— not the most easy-going person, but we were in some shopping centre like Bromley shopping centre one day in a cafe and you were squalling [baby noises]. And I was like trying to quiet you and everything, and she was like, "oh Ruth relax people are used to babies you can't like all—" And I was like— oh my God, if my Mum is telling me this—

Amy: Is telling you [laughs].

Ruth: [laughs]— It's like this must be bad, you know what I mean.

Amy: Oh my God.

Ruth: But I was very sort of self-conscious and like I felt quite young as a parent and you know it just— it didn't like— I was like— I couldn't really relax. So, I— I think I was quite uptight all the time.

Amy: Mm. And none of your friends had children, right?



Ruth: None of our friends had children. Obviously if we went back to the Olneys, then baby just went off somewhere on the rounds, you know what I mean? Like there were—

Amy: Perfect.

Ruth: — so many different pairs of hands or whatever. But even then, I felt a little bit incompetent, if you know what I mean, as in, because I could not relax really.

Amy: I know what you mean.

Ruth: I was always really like, probably picking you up when I didn't need to, or just fretting or— I just couldn't concentrate on anything to be honest. And also, then it was really boring because everybody was just talking to you about, like I really adored you, but every other conversation just stopped so it was great to go to like courses and get back to work. So, when I had you, I was actually looking forward to going back to work a lot.

[56.59]

Amy: Yeah.

Ruth: Because I just felt like I'm just not that good at this on— on its own, I need to do some other things as well.

Amy: When did you start studying? Alongside working?

Ruth: I think I was studying before I had you and after I had you and when I had Alice, so. So, this is in— this is 1991 [looking at a diary].

Amy: Umhm. So, when you were pregnant?

Ruth: Yes, on the 24th of July I went to see "In bed with Madonna" at the Canon Haymarket. And then on Saturday the 27th of July I flew to Antigua.

Amy: Did you?



Ruth: And I was just pregnant, just pregnant. I had this friend at work called Sue [redacted]. And she was from Antigua, and I went to Antigua with her and her friend— her friend? No, her brother, Jeremy. And so, yeah, we went to Antigua for I think three weeks. It was all very weird. Because I was pregnant. She kept trying to set me up with people and I did get set up with someone.

Amy: Did you, who?

Ruth: Yeah, this guy called Errol.

Amy: Errol? [Laughs]

Ruth: Yeah, he was Antiguan. [Pause]. Yeah, so that was that. I wonder if I was studying that Sept— that sort of— I don't think I did study that— Oh, I did, look, "Room G1 Ground Floor, Main Block, Birkbeck. Registration: three passport photos, £90" [laughs]. So, I think I must have—

Amy: [Laughs] I thought you meant you paid £90 for three passport photos.

Ruth: No [laughs], that was the fee for my course, imagine. How cheap was that.

Amy: Oh my God, I wish it was like that now.

Ruth: So, I think I— I don't know now because I did a certificate in Contemporary Studies. Here it says, "Democracy and Revolution" and then it says, "The English Revolution, Britain at the Turn of the Century." This looks like my degree though because it seemed to be two nights a week. "The American Revolution," "The Social and Economic impact of World War II." I was going two nights a week. So, I started doing a degree in Humanities, so you could pick like Literature, History, Film. I don't know when I started that, whether it was the year before or this year and then I transferred to History because I really liked History. So, I think I started on three nights a week and then I went to two nights a week. So, this looks like History because it says— it seems to be two nights a week. No recollection of doing some of these things. "Britain's Post-War Positions." No, no recollection. So, I was doing the course when I was pregnant with you. And— and then I— I would have gone back to that and then gone to Ireland for the summer. And then gone back to work in the— I don't know, the



Autumn maybe. I don't know where the dates are, but I loved studying. When I look back at my dates and everything it was like, I loved it. It was like you met all these different people and just learnt all this stuff. And I loved Birkbeck, all the different people coming and going and like, so yeah it was amazing.

Amy: What made you decide to start studying?

[01.00:38]

Ruth: The first like— the first year— So I could have gone to University in Cork, but I could only have done Arts and at that point in time I wasn't that committed, if you know what I mean? So, I thought I would just spend like three years in the College bar basically. So, I decided to give it a miss and I also kind of wanted to move out of home. Well I de— no, not kind of— I definitely wanted to move out of home. Although I didn't in the end I stayed at home until I moved to London, I never moved out in Cork. But I wanted like independence from my— my Dad like is lovely but he sort of would— his way of sort of keeping you on side was to give you money, if you know what I mean?

Amy: Right.

Ruth: So, it was a kind of way of controlling you as well as of being a good generous Dad. So, I wanted that, I wanted my own independence. And then when I came to London I applied for a degree in Anthropology, at SOAS.

Amy: Oh really?

Ruth: And I was offered a place.

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: But then I looked at the finances and I was like "Why did I think I could afford to do this course?"

Amy: Full time?



Ruth: And live in London. Yeah. Yeah so, I— I just turned it down and then I did this Certificate in Contemporary Studies, so you did all these different subjects. It was a sort of a precursor to— to going on a degree. You could decide then what you liked.

Amy: That sounds good.

Ruth: Yeah, it was really good. But I was listening to something on the radio yesterday and they said that like, there's sixty-one [%] decrease in part time degree studies since all of the fees' thing.

Amy: Oh right.

Ruth: And I was thinking would I ever of done everything I've done —

Amy: If it cost then what it costs now?

Ruth: — Like a BA and an MA and a PHD if I'd have to pay all those fees? I never would have. But it's been like such an amazing experience.

Amy: Umhm. I think it will really drop now. I think there are people doing undergraduates on the nine grand, more out of— because it's like a cultural habit for so many people to go to university— But I think it will drop dramatically.

Ruth: Because it doesn't have so much value now. No, no. So, there we are.

Amy: Umhm. Do you want to take a break?

Ruth: Yeah.

[End of tape 01:03:00]