

Glyn Jenkins

[00:00:00]

PARTICIPANT: D'you want my name?

[00:00:05]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah. Glyn Jenkins. I was born in Radcliffe in 1943, toward the end of the war. I don't remember any of the war at all. Then my parents owned a shop in Bury, and I lived in Bury for, I don't know how many years. Then I moved to Stockport with my parents, and grew up in Stockport, went to Stockport school. I then, when I was 16 I didn't think I was clever enough to go to university. In those days, you had to be clever, so instead I joined Barclays bank, and I worked with them from 16 until I was 54. Worked my way up. In those days training was quite rigorous, you had to take all kinds of exams. I worked my way— they were actually degree level exams, but you had to do them in your own time, at night, so, I finally became a bank manager until Barclays bank decided that we were too expensive for them, so they made me redundant when I was 54 with an incredible package which included a full pension, a rather large sum of money, and private health insurance, and that was it. I then started— I've never stopped working for charities. At one stage, about three or four years ago, I was actually treasurer of four charities at the same time. One of which was Healthy Gay— one of which was the Lesbian and Gay Foundation— no, that's even wrong, isn't it. LGBT Foundation.

[00:02:16]

INTERVIEWER: That's right.

PARTICIPANT: I get very confused because I've been— I know it's been that for a while but I still think of it as the LGF.

[00:02:22]

INTERVIEWER: Right, ok.

PARTICIPANT: Yep. In fact, this year, I got an MBE for it. November the 10th this year, went down to Buckingham Palace and got uh, Prince William gave me my MBE. So, that was for the charity work.

[00:02:45]

INTERVIEWER: How was that?

PARTICIPANT: How was it?

[00:02:47]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: Incredible.

[00:02:48]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: Unbelievable. It was— I can't remember it. I know it sounds stupid, I just can't remember what happened, it was so awe-inspiring in the throne room and everything. I've got a video of it but I haven't been able to watch it yet because I've never had a DVD player. I bought one and it didn't work, so now I've got to buy another one.

[00:03:19]

INTERVIEWER: Right, ok.

PARTICIPANT: So I might then see— I have no idea what he said to me, he chatted for quite a few minutes, Prince William, but I've no idea what he said. Can't remember.

[00:03:31]

INTERVIEWER: Just, were you— was it nerves, do you think?

PARTICIPANT: Oh yeah, yes. Terrifying. [both laugh]

[00:03:39]

INTERVIEWER: And did you— what do you have to do, do you have to bow, or?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I actually went up in my wheelchair, I got some photos that show downstairs, because I can't walk very far with my lung condition. So I had me own page boy in tails and silver buttons, and he pushed me up to Prince William, yes, and he spoke and you just bow your head. Everybody else who walked up, you had to— literally two paces forward, turn to the left, bow, two paces forward, then that's it. But of course— and I have a horrible suspicion I forgot to bow. [both laugh] Just a horrible suspicion I forgot to bow, 'cause it was so unbelievable. I am actually a very nervous person. I'm very shy.

[00:04:41]

INTERVIEWER: And yet you've been involved in so many things.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah. Yes but it's, you just do it. You might be shy, you might be nervous, but you just get on with it. If you ask Paul Martin he'd probably tell you I'm not shy, but inside I quake. I mean I've done some things that, how I've ever done them I don't know.

[00:05:10]

INTERVIEWER: Can we hear about some of those things?

PARTICIPANT: Well, I used to be treasurer of Cancer Research campaign in Stockport, and we once had a— for some reason, don't ask me how or why, but we ended up having a concert by an opera singer called Victoria de Los Angeles. She's dead now, I think, but at the time she was one of the top people. And I was told that I had to go on stage and present her with flowers at the end, and I think, I don't remember the first— I remember listening to her 'til the interview, but then from the interview 'til the end of the concert, I was in the bar, trying to get some courage up, because I was convinced I was going to walk on stage, trip, and do a, bu-bu-bu-bumph up to her with a bunch of flowers. So that's one. What else was there?

I used to be, again, treasurer, of Stockport Youth Travel Association, we used to arrange holidays between different countries. Young people in Stockport. They used to come to England and stay with young people in England, and then, you used to have to go back, you take them back, the English back at the second fortnight and stayed with them in their houses. So, now, I had to go on to— on one of them, it was in Nant in France, and we had, there was a civic reception. And I got to the civic reception to find out that the local television station was recording it, and I had to make a speech, in French, which I can't do, I can't speak French, and I literally learnt it off by heart, the people in France taught me, so I was on French television. That was dreadful. The mayor of Nant came up to me and blathered away in French and I just kept saying, "Ah, oui oui oui", because I had no idea what he said, and then he presented me with a huge cigar and lit it, and it was awful, dreadful. But that was— you just get on with things. You may be shy, you may be nervous, but you can't let it ruin your life so you've got to just get on.

[00:08:03]

INTERVIEWER: So how did you first get involved with the LGBT Foundation or what it was previously? What was your first— can you tell me about your first—

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, I— as I say, I was a bank manager. And Paul Martin, who's the CEO of the LGBT Foundation, he used to, he had an office in the gay centre just off Oxford Road, and he was being employed by Manchester city council for Mesmac. Now, there was a cafe in the gay centre, and they weren't doing terribly well. I was a bit bothered about their finances because they were— it was touch and go whether we could pay the cheques. So I went in one day to see what was going on. I— to be truthful, I don't think it was their fault, the Manchester city council at that time weren't looking after the premises. And there were buckets all around the room, because it was leaking, the roof.

[00:09:20]

INTERVIEWER: Is this on Sydney Street?

PARTICIPANT: That's the one, on Sydney Street, yeah. And it was leaking everywhere. So it wasn't a nice place to go in and have a cup of coffee. So, went in,

we sorted them out, or, I sorted them out. I say "we". And they said, would I have a word with Paul Martin because he was having a bit of problems. So I said yes, I did, and we struck up a rapport. I won't tell you what I did with him, not with his finances, it's up to him to say that, but I did get him, you know, helped him out.

Then he formed— because then he was a one-man band with Mesmac. Then he formed Healthy Gay Manchester, which was a bigger organisation, they started off with one room in the Northern Quarter right on the top floor, and there was only about three or four. Now, so he started that up, and again they banked with me. Then I was made redundant when I was 54, so that was 20 years ago. And, he then said, would I— asked me if I'd join the board at Healthy Gay Manchester. So I joined the board of Healthy Gay Manchester and I've seen the transition from then to now. Been there when they merged with Switchboard, so that's one of the things. Then it's just grown and grown and grown. It does much more now than it ever used to do. But the— but I know it had done a few groups, but its main sphere was free condoms in Manchester, condoms and lube. In fact I've sat and, in those days, we used to do our own. Not— we didn't make our own, but we used to buy loose condoms and we used to buy loose lube sachets and we literally sat in a room, packing them into little packets. So it was— we had a lot of volunteers, or a fair number of volunteers, but nowhere near what we've got now, it's incredible now. It does so much more.

[00:12:13]

INTERVIEWER: Ok. That's really great. I'm gonna ask you to go back again to the first— to the early days.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

[00:12:27]

INTERVIEWER: Can you excuse me one moment, I'm gonna grab a throat sweet so I don't start coughing.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah!

[pause][00:12:41]

[00:12:45]

INTERVIEWER: Brought these especially.

[pause][00:12:46]

[00:13:04]

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering if we could go back to— obviously this project is trying to document campaigns and activism that sparked things like Healthy Gay Manchester in terms of responses to HIV/AIDS and sexual health. But I was wondering if you could kind of, well actually go back even further, because when we

were talking before you mentioned that you've grown up before the decriminalisation— or the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, and could you share some of your experiences of that period?

PARTICIPANT: Yes. Obviously it was illegal. I used to come into Manchester— it all started when I used to go to the bank in Manchester studying for my banking exams. And one day, I got on the train— I started working Romley, and I used to get on the train in Romley, and come in to Manchester, and walk to the bank. And I think it was bad weather. And it was so, it was— I don't know what happened to the train. My course started at six o'clock, and I think the train arrived at seven, in Manchester. So I started walking toward the bank, and I thought, "I missed the first hour, I've only got another hour, it's just ridiculous to even go in for that". So I called— I thought, "Oh, I'll go in for a drink" and I saw somebody going into this bar, so I thought, "Oh, I'll try that one", which happened to be the Rembrandt. In the days, when it was nothing like it is now, there was a piano in one little room, and the bar was in the centre, a little square. There was a room at the end that had armchairs in it and a big roaring fire, and that was my first foray into the gay side of Manchester. It was an eye-opener. But in those days the only places were the Rembrandt, and the New Union. Now the New Union, in those days, you only went in if you took your own straw. It was filthy, it was awful. So those were about the only places that you could go to. But it, they weren't advertised as gay bars, it was just happened to be that they were. I was quite lucky in a way that I just happened to fall on the right one.

And it— oh, you couldn't do anything. Not... it was dreadful to live in that, to be gay and not be able to be open about it, or whatever, you know. You had to be so careful. Then shortly after that, I found out that there was one club, but it was a— the only way they could sell alcohol was if you bought food. It was called a supper license. But even that, it was like, you knock on the door, and the little grill would open, and they'd let you in, and it was downstairs. Tiny dance floor, unfortunately, with a mirror, a very large mirror next to the dance floor, and I think I saw myself dancing once and then, that was it, never ever again. I couldn't. I had more arms and legs than god knows what. But then they even used to have a room where you played cards, and I know it was illegal because they were betting on it.

[00:17:53]

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the name of the place?

PARTICIPANT: Rockingham I think it might have been, I think it was called the Rockingham. It's been, the area's been pulled down now, but. That was the first club I ever went into, and there were loads of— then, over the years, others opened, and it was... I think whilst it wasn't decriminalised 'til 1967, I think it became more— it wasn't quite as persecuted toward the end, it was more, providing you didn't get up to anything, um, what was it? Public decency, outraging public decency, so long as you didn't do that, you were alright. And it was, it started off becoming easier to go out. It used to be the stage you used to walk down the street and you'd look round everywhere to see if anybody was about that could see you going into these places, so, that's awful feeling, isn't it. I can remember going to one club, I have no idea what it was called now, no idea, and I mean in those days when you went out, you went out in a suit: no jeans, tie, the lot. And I can remember going to one club, and again,

you had to knock on the door and they let you in. And they wouldn't let me in, because they said, "We don't allow police in here", so. Somebody [missed] [00:19:59] was with me, said, "He's not with the police" but they still wouldn't let me in. That was only on one occasion, I went [missed] [00:20:07] after that but yeah, it was not nice.

Then it was decriminalised, but even then there was a lot of— whilst it was not illegal, it was not illegal— it was legal in private, and there was a lot of talk about if you did it in a hotel, it was supposed to be still illegal, because a hotel was public. So it had to be in private.

[00:20:41]

INTERVIEWER: I know you mentioned before, there was an incident in Stockport you were aware of.

PARTICIPANT: Yes well, my wife was a magistrate. And it was one of the first cases she ever had as a magistrate, because she was one of the youngest magistrates ever appointed, she was 30. And, no— it must have been, if she was 30... '43, '63, '73... It was after decriminalisation. But it was when the time when it— it had to be in private, and she was a magistrate, and two men were caught near the gasworks in Stockport, which was a place which was off the beaten track and quiet, and they were caught having... sex I suppose, I don't know what it was, what they were up to, in a car, and it was quiet, and she was— she had to rule on it, I suppose. They had to find them guilty because they were doing it in public. I mean I still don't think you're allowed to do it in public public, but it's not— it's certainly not as bad now as it was then. Took a long time for, even after decriminalisation, it took a long time for it to become almost the norm.

[00:22:39]

INTERVIEWER: [coughs] Excuse me.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

[00:22:42]

INTERVIEWER: When did you remember first hearing about this thing called AIDS, or HIV?

PARTICIPANT: I remember watching a television programme, and it was some person, they were doing a documentary. And he was talking about, it wasn't known— even then, it wasn't called AIDS or HIV, it was immune deficiency. And there was this bloke who was on, talking about it, and he apparently had got this immune deficiency, which meant that his immune system was compromised, and it wouldn't, he couldn't fight off any infections. So, that was the first time I ever heard— it was only a couple years later that it became known as AIDS. So I suddenly remembered, I remember the programme, I can still see it in my mind. And then of course AIDS— we didn't talk about HIV then, it was just purely AIDS. [coughs] Excuse me.

[00:24:05]

INTERVIEWER: Would you like some water?

PARTICIPANT: No, I'm fine. I'm fine, I think. Um, and then two friends of mine, they actually died of AIDS. One of them was a, in those days, he was a matron at a hospital in Stockport, but he was the matron of the mental health department, and his partner, when he died, his partner wouldn't admit that it was AIDS, but it was a matter of, in those days, he was put in a body bag and sealed up and, it was because nobody knew anything, what to do or anything. Now his partner refused, just, would say it wasn't AIDS but it was. And shortly afterwards, two years later, he died of it as well. So they were quite good friends of ours.

[00:25:22]

INTERVIEWER: Why, I mean, for someone who doesn't know much about it, why do you think he denied that? What was that?

PARTICIPANT: Because there was the stigma of AIDS.

[00:25:33]

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: It was a definite stigma. In those days, if somebody had got AIDS, they were shunned, they went into hospital and went into isolation, you know because they didn't know at that time, I don't think they really understood how— or a lot of people didn't understand how it was transmitted. You can't transmit it by shaking hands, you can't transmit it by hugging somebody. You had to transfer bodily fluids. So in those days, people— if you got AIDS, you were just kind of locked up, almost. It was not a nice time. So then they found out, of course, that— how it was transmitted, and it— HIV came in beforehand, and that HIV was when you— although you hadn't contracted the full AIDS, you were HIV positive, or negative, whichever, you know. But if you were HIV positive, it was, even then, it was HIV positive but it was still a death sentence, because you would end up with full blown AIDS. And then of course, they found drugs, and it's not the death sentence anymore, it's quite controlled. It's not curable, but it's— they say now that you don't— if you have HIV, it's quite possible it will be something else that kills you, not HIV now. So it has changed, and I don't think the stigma is no longer there, I mean you'll hear people talking about, yes they're positive, they don't mind admitting it because there isn't the same horror.

I mean can you remember the adverts that they used to have on television with those huge headstones falling over with "AIDS" all over them, it was— I think those did a lot of good because they made people aware, and this organisation, LGBT, since Healthy Gay Manchester been issuing free condoms in Manchester— I dread to think how many condoms they've actually issued over the years, must be betting on for the million. So, that's why the funding was initially from the health authorities to provide the condoms, to try and stop the spread of it. It hasn't done, unfortunately.

[00:29:09]

INTERVIEWER: Could you just say, going back to your friends, what kind of impact did that have on you personally, but what was also the impact more broadly as well, amongst HIV, and in those early days when treatment wasn't available?

PARTICIPANT: It was... The impact on me was, you must have safe sex. You must do. And, I can remember arguing with some of, people who worked even in the organisation who were saying that it's a personal choice. Now, how they could work for the organisation and say it's a personal choice I could never get me head round it, because if you're in an organisation that is trying to stop the spread of AIDS, the message we should have been getting out then was "You must use a condom, you must do", not "It's up to you whether you want to or not". I could never get me head round that, I just found it wrong. I mean the two friends of mine that died, they were dreadfully promiscuous, you— they used to go to orgies, and you just think to yourself, well, how many other people did they infect? And, if they'd worn condoms every time, then— of course there's going to be the odd accident because condoms aren't 100% secure, they can break, so you just wonder how many people would have been saved the trauma that they went through, and their families went through. But even then it was, nobody would admit that they died of AIDS, but you knew they had, and when you'd hear how they died, it was obvious.

[00:31:34]

INTERVIEWER: What kind of impact do you think the condom and lube scheme had in Manchester?

PARTICIPANT: I think it had a good, a quite— yes it did, it must have had a good impact, because for every person who wears a condom, it doesn't just stop the spread of AIDS, it stops other STIs. And, I do think, I mean I used to go— part of my job was to train at the bank's training centre in London, so I used to go down to London quite a lot. Now, they had a condom and lube distribution scheme down there, but you actually had to ask somebody in a bar, "Have you got any condoms", and they would give you two free, and that was it, you couldn't— whereas we had them all over the place, in different locations, from— there used to be clubs in Manchester which had dark rooms, and we used to supply them in there, so it's just a matter of, if everybody uses them— we still provide them, still issue loads. And I'm sure, I'm sure it's stopped the spread of it. It's getting a bit worrying now, to me, but because people now talk about PrEP, there's a certain section of the population, I think, who think, oh they're going to be alright, they'll take PrEP, and they're doing away with using condoms, and I think it's a bit of a retrograde step, personally. That's me. And I don't know whether, you know, other people think the same. But I just think it's— you don't know what PrEP's going to do to the body over time.

[00:33:50]

INTERVIEWER: What— hm. Could you just tell me, sum up for me, the rationale behind Healthy Gay Manchester, because it was also trying to put out a positive message in the face of this epidemic.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, it was— the rationale. It was— I mean, Paul Martin started it, and his was that we had to stop the spread of this dreadful disease. And he's very good, he managed to get all the, all the funding in, in those days. And he's not quite involved in that side as he was, because obviously we've got more paid staff now, and there are Rob Cooks[?] [00:34:53] and he's one of the people who goes out and tries to raise funds, and there are other people who do it so he's not quite as involved, but initially, he was determined that we had to stop the spread of this dreadful disease. And, it was him who started off with, let's— if everyone would use a condom when they had sex— I mean if you think about it, there's an awful lot of people who got it, but if everybody who has sex would have sex with a condom, it could be wiped out within a generation.

[00:35:50]

INTERVIEWER: you said before that you've seen the organisation change over the years. Obviously it's changed its name. Looking back, what do you think has changed the most. I mean you mentioned funding, but have other things changed as well, like the services?

PARTICIPANT: The services have changed tremendously. The initial funding was, as I say, was from health authorities. The funding now is— I think they used to be something like 85 to 90% of our funding in the very early stages. It's nowhere near that now, because funding comes from lottery! Lottery, yeah, it comes from red nose day, it comes from all kinds of different organisations, so we get a lot of funding from other— it's not reliant, solely reliant on the NHS, fortunately, because they are cutting and cutting and cutting, and they have cut— over the last couple of years, they have cut their funding to us considerably. But Pride, they always give us quite a large sum each year, which funds the condom and lube scheme.

But we also get funding now for mental health. Mental health, we never had funding— we used to do it on a shoestring, but we now actually get funding for mental health. We have funding for the women's programme, because in the, initially, there was no funding for lesbians, none at all. But now it's quite large funding for them, from various organisations. There's— we have, we used to do a magazine. Used to, but it got too expensive, and obviously what we weren't certain about how much benefit we got from it, so we canceled that. We're not afraid to cancel something if it's not right, so we did cancel it. But we look at, all the time, of new initiatives, things we can do. The helpline, we still run the helpline, and that is— I was talking to reception this morning before you arrived, and she said, oh they get phone calls from all over the country, even all over the world. Because our— we are very— our profile is very high, so we still do the helpline. We have groups, the older men's group, the art group for the women's work. We now do trans, we have one of our trustees is a transgender person. So we do— we never did that before, we've got funding for that as well.

The organisation has never stood still. I think that's a basically a thing we have to mention. It's not stood still, it's changing all the time, we're changing for the good. If there is a need, then— we have a befriending scheme, which people that— we have a number of volunteers who will befriend people who need it, take them out for a

drink, or they go out with them for a drink. Older men's group, all kinds of different things that the organisation does.

[00:40:30] End of transcript.