

1.

JB 00.06 I came to Brighton in 1980. In those days of course one would migrate to the cities that you knew were gay just by finding out the information in the Pink Paper or ringing London Switchboard. There weren't that many places of communication. So I came to Brighton from Birmingham, left a girlfriend of mine up there, you know finished off the relationship and came down to Brighton which I knew was very popular in the gay world. In 1985 I started off with Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard. It was only Gay Switchboard in those days.

00.55 Targeted for men?

Actually it was called Gay but they had Thursdays as a women's night. In those days it was only open from 8-10 and that's why they concentrated on having women on gay switchboard on that particular night. There was Lesbian Line in those days as well but Brighton gay switchboard wanted to include women as well which was a good thing because that was a start (...) turned into LGBT. So I was happy to do that and it was nice to meet the other guys who worked who also helped on the Switchboard as well. The convenor in those days was Edward and we used to meet once a month in his flat and he was a very interesting person because he was associated with the theatre, arts and so we'd sit in his flat and there were pictures of actors, Vanessa Redgrave was one and I remember thinking he used to go and meet her for meals etc.

So going back to the 1980s where you still had to, even in Brighton, be careful about letting on you were gay. There was no ... You wouldn't go into work and say hey I'm gay, in case, you didn't know. The prejudice could be such that you could lose your job. You just kept that part of your life very quiet. But in some respects it was much more fun. We were told when I first started on Switchboard: don't tell anyone where the office is, except maybe a close friend. Don't advertise it because of course you could be queer-bashed and the guys were very wary of this.

This was also pre-aids so the calls we got mainly in 1985, pre-internet and pre-mobile phones, there were telephones (...). But when I joined it was only 10 years old because it started in 1975. It was in its infancy, Brighton Switchboard, but I think it was the third to start off. London came first but I don't know if it was second or third, Brighton, because of the number of gay people living in the town.

03.19 So it was established because... there was a need?

JB Yes, because there was quite a big need for it. With no internet people would arrive in Brighton and phone up Switchboard which would be advertised in all the gay magazines, there was the Pink Paper you could pick up and Gay Times. I think they were two main sources of communication to find out telephone numbers for Switchboard, for locations and where to go. Anybody ringing us up not only were we there for emotional communication but where can we go, where can we stay? So it was a much more used line than in this day and age, which is more emotional now as opposed to going out to pubs and clubs.

Because it was pre-aids a lot of guys would ring up with VD, venereal disease as it was called in those days. Now called STIs. Sexually transmitted infections, which does sound a bit more gruesome (...) I've got syphilis, where do I go?

And blackmail. A lot of men would phone up because in those days until a few years ago the age of consent for men was 21 and a lot of men with important jobs like Bank Manager, I'm a Bank Manager and I'm being blackmailed by this young guy that I picked up and he'd be under the age of 21 and they wouldn't hesitate, there was a lot of it about, to blackmail the older partner. That's changed dramatically. The government has done itself a favour by lowering the age of consent because that has wiped out a whole load of nasty crimes. It's amazing how doing something like this has changed the social (...) changed something in one fell swoop, doing something like that.

05.44 JB So that's what I've been doing. Working through the years for Switchboard and of course helping out. I'm also the Chairwoman of Lesbian Link. Which is another social group, mainly pointing towards older women. It's a social group where you go out and meet in a pub once a month, actually tonight. We have a supper club, we do social functions just to keep the network together so if anyone's fallen out or split up from a relationship (...) I'm just trying to think, going back in time to Switchboard and everything was so different.

6.32 How did you get involved in Switchboard?

JB Rosemary, a friend of mine, she was working on it and she wanted to give it up so she asked me in the Long Branch one evening if I'd be interested in doing it. I must admit, actually I've only just found out recently, in those days you were referred by somebody and then you'd go and have dinner with Edward and he'd have another operator with him. I think Rosemary came with me. The four of us would sit round a table, fill in an application form and then you'd wait and they'd decide you might be alright. Then you'd sit in with 6 operators and if the operators thought there was any problem they'd get in touch with Edward. If he didn't hear anything, after the 6<sup>th</sup> session you were then initiated and then you were OK as a Switchboard operator. Nowadays it's completely different. Just about three weeks ago, I was talking to Kathy, one of the volunteers and Graham, one of the volunteers who come into Switchboard, you've got to have references now. Of course in those days you wouldn't dream of asking for a reference from your employer, because being gay you could possibly lose your job over it. Discrimination was really rife. You've got to be CRB checked now which of course I can understand is in line with today. You got to be much more aware, because of the social media out and about.

But yes the difference between then and now it's incredible. In the 80s we still had standards, of course. We were not supposed to go and meet a caller, it was strictly over the phone, remain anonymous. If anybody broke that rule and I think over the years, once or twice, a couple of guys have broken the rule, in which case they were instantly dismissed. So there were standards in those days.

8.50 How would you advise the people, depending on what they....?

JB If they just wanted pubs and clubs that was easy. Emotionally wise, we dealt with a lot of that. Coming out in those days was a much bigger thing because of social media it's much more acceptable these days. The government, voting on gay marriage, which is fantastic.

In those days it was much more scary, how do I tell my family, how do I tell my parents, my job, where do I go, how can I contact other gay people? We had a little filing box of what was going on Brighton but other places as well, and groups. We'd keep up to date with social groups and be able to refer. We were a signpost to other social groups for you and everything. We didn't deal so much to do with transgender issues in those days. In the last 10 years these are coming to the front which it should do as these people definitely need help and as you know and that's really growing which is fantastic. We dealt with a lot of cross-dressing and just listening in those days and just saying it's not odd, this is what we were trying to say, and don't be frightened and you're not alone. That was the main thing. I wish you'd been there because in a way, it was much more exciting. I love telling people it was like being in the French Resistance going along to the Switchboard office in those days. We shared an office with (...) because we were only open from 8-10, our phone and our filing box and log sheet were kept in a filing cabinet. There was a paper spike, we opened the filing cabinet by that, get the phone out, get the filing, get the log. And we'd keep a log just for regular callers so people could see what was happening and just in case they called up again people were aware of what had been said previously. But it was also for information like gay-friendly doctors, solicitors. But I suppose it was more uncomplicated because we didn't have civil partnerships, marriages so I presume we'll have to know more about divorce lawyers in the future, she said on a bright note. So the whole social structure's changing but it's always been interesting and something I'm pleased I've done.

12.12 How many years were you employed there?

JB I'm still there. 28 years now. I'd never leave Brighton I love the regularity of it, I do it three times a month, it suits my personality. I find it very interesting. I always wanted to help people and found this was a very good outlet. Apparently I'm quite good on the phone. I've been told, and I'm glad I've been able to participate in that. They kindly gave me a golden handbag award in 2006 for being there 20 years. But to me it's the history of being there for all that time, it's something I'm really pleased to have lived through. To see the changing world, to see the acceptance now of not just gay, lesbian and bisexual people but transgender as well. We have to learn about transgender too. If you're just gay then you have to put yourself into that person's position where they're desperate to get out of the body they're in and changing the body. But yes, of course Brighton has lots of people migrating into the town. When I came out, I realised I was gay in 1975, the first motto was 'don't shit on your doorstep', in other words leave home because your parents wouldn't want to know, your family – would they want to know? Well, your sister might think it's OK. But you just don't know. Everything's changed. Family life is orientated to the fact that your child could be transgender, could be gay, bisexual – well that wouldn't be that noticeable anyway. Everything's changing now for the better.

14.30 Do you have an estimate of what percentage of people in Brighton are gay?

JB Quite a lot. I think they reckon that 10% of the population is gay. Probably more actually, more, a lot more bisexual. I think they did put down was it 30,000? I'm not sure. Certainly a huge amount.

I still think this is the most gay-friendly town in the whole country. I nearly went to a school reunion of 40 years, and you don't realise just how gay-friendly Brighton is until you go somewhere else. I was telling an old school friend I hadn't seen for 40 years that I'm gay but they didn't quite accept it as much as - it was alright, but suddenly you realise you might come across some prejudice, which you've forgotten existed because you live here. I think the rest of the country is still a bit middle England, their sort of family values. Mind you I'd hate to live in bible belt America - awful. It's like a little bubble and you think you're free and you forget just up the road in Burgess Hill people have different opinions.

It's interesting cos I represented Switchboard at BHASVIC, the college up there for 16-18 yr olds. We were welcomed with open arms. Someone, the organiser, said to me it was important because some of the children live in Burgess Hill, Hassocks, just slightly away from Brighton and they come from a different town with different values, or ignorance is basically what it is, and it's good that we're there so they can realise it and not worry about it or discriminate against anybody that is gay. I like Stonewall's poster, 'some people are gay, get over it.' I love that, I think they really hit the nail on the head. Stonewall had sent all these posters and stickers and they were sticking them on each other. I think ignorance plays a part of course in prejudice and that's one reason why I am very glad now people are more open about being gay.

17.20 You said a little bit about how the changes in laws and changes in society might have changed the concerns and questions that people ask Switchboard. So what do they come with now?

JB More emotional problems and of course you've still got people who are stuck in the country somewhere and feel a bit isolated and we have regular callers and they phone us up once or twice a week and they just want to talk. That's another reason why we're there. But it's more emotional now. I'm really pleased the transgender issue has been advertised more, because we've really had to read up on it all in order to signpost people, who need the help, surgery etc. I've noticed the transgender issues have appeared more. It's certainly more emotional, more about maybe a break in relationship, children. It's changed in the fact that, if you want a child, a baby, you can signpost people where to go, what to do. That's what's changed and of course with civil partnerships, it's 'have you got a good lawyer? We're splitting up'. Even though it's good, civil partnership is good, there's marriage coming along but the inevitable happens. People want to talk about it if there's children involved, how upsetting it is. And depression of course, probably more emotional...I sometimes think in this day and age because everything's easy to deal with and because of this it changes people's resistance, so your resistance is lower if something happened: help what do we do? Whereas before you'd have worked it out yourself. It changes the make up of people and people want instant help now. There's technology of course. It's changed - it used

to be phone boxes, now it's mobiles - I'm in a phone box and I think I'm gay. My money's going to be running out shortly.

20.09 For me contacting people personally would be a big step, ringing someone up. I think I'd go online immediately.

JB I think people do that now. This is why in the days I first started we used to get a lot of silent calls, we still do. It's finding the courage to speak to someone but on the other hand what can you do? You couldn't go online then, you wanted to be free. I remember thinking oh my god I'm gay, but I've got to do something, I've got to make friends - that was such a big step. Even though it's 2013 you've still got to make that big step but in those days you had to phone or try and go somewhere. I think there was a lot of people migrating to London, think Manchester. I went to Southampton first of all. Just a nice safe ... I felt as if I was on the road, got a job down there in the 70's and tentatively stepped out into the gay world like that. But you're right... people ringing up, I think I'm gay and that's invariably what people. And of course they are and you gently prise them out, let them speak and suddenly full flow, and then hopefully signpost them to somewhere, a social group or ... Invariably in the 80's there'd be groups. The men had groups like Grapevine and if they were in the Brighton area you'd signpost to them and off they'd go and hopefully live a happy life. And that's kind of nice and the same for women as well, places to go, groups that were set up and Lesbian Line. Always there was somewhere somebody could go, whether man or woman. Now with transgender issues there's the Clare Project, so we send them there. Which is great, as long as there's somewhere to go it's fine. Basically you just listen to the person on the phone, you'd signpost them to wherever. I think we always had a copy of Gay Times and Spartacus, anywhere around the world, go there, there and there. That's basically what we did, that's all you needed really.

22.40 So if you arrived in Brighton, brand new, Switchboard would still be a good place to start?

JB Yes, absolutely. I tell you what I did when I arrived in Brighton. We had a YWCA just along the seafront. What I did, I went from .... Right I'm going to Brighton, literally with two suitcases because I was young in those days and you did things like that. I looked after myself, didn't expect any parental help. I found a job in a restaurant on the seafront in March 1980 and one of the girls who worked there said there's a room going just along the seafront in Cavendish Place and that's how I got a foothold in Brighton. So I worked in the restaurant. I had been to college and trained as a hotel receptionist and ended up being a hotel receptionist for 13 years, along the seafront again. Then I bought my flat, I had an inheritance from my grandfather, I bought my flat cash. In 1994 I bought my flat for £14000. The property prices were really low. It's a beautiful studio flat. Then got a job part-time with BT. I was there 17 years and took .... last year and now I work in my local launderette just to enjoy my later years doing what I'd like to do.

And that's how you did it. If you go to a seaside place you've got hotels and invariably they offer accommodation as well, safety net. It must be fairly easy to move somewhere now cos you go online, you put rooms to let. You need references galore these days. But that's how you did it. I did that in Southampton, London.

24.38 Did you know anyone in Brighton when you first moved here? No friends?

JB No, never been to Brighton in my life.

24.45 So how did you start making friends?

JB Go to the Dorset Arms. Again, I probably phoned up Switchboard and said 'I'm new here, where can I go?' And they'd say Dorset Arms, every Wednesday night, went in, said I'm new, made friends, that's it.

25.08 Why was it important to have gay friends, lesbian friends?

JB Cos in those days it was them and us. More so now and you need gay friends to support you, so you can talk about how your relationship is going. I don't know if you do remember, there was this man who placed bombs. He didn't like Muslims, he didn't like somebody else, he didn't like gays. So he placed a bomb in Brick Lane in one of the pubs. What he hadn't reckoned on was when you walked into a gay pub everyone would look at you. So when the police wanted an ID they had loads of witnesses to say he looked like this. And this is what happened, go in a gay pub and everybody would look at you. Conversations like I think so and so from work's gay and then they'd walk in. It was much more secretive, I'd say it was much more fun than it is now.

26.12 Why would you say it's more fun?

JB Because you were in.. secretive. I'm gay, you're gay. All sisters together. Literally it was we were family. One of the expressions in those days was 'is so and so family?' whether it was a man or woman, meaning are they gay? Cos there'd be lots of different ways of interpreting it. If straight people were next to you they wouldn't know what the hell you were talking about. They wouldn't know. So you lived like that. This is why I say it made more fun. More exciting. Brighton always had pubs and clubs. I think we had the 42 Club in the 80's where it was open in the afternoon and of course in those days pubs were not open in the afternoon. This has only been, I think it was when John Major came in in the 90's that they allowed pubs to stay open all afternoon. That's why it was easier on the continent for the British to go and drink, drink, drink, drink because they were so used to the pubs closing at 3 o'clock. Much better to have the pubs open during the day.

It was all, where to go? And not only that we always used to have a laugh. You still do. Where gay people take the piss out of straight people. Why not? Because you have to go through discrimination, have to keep quiet, so have a laugh, and have a laugh at ourselves. It was good. I know it was more them and us and in some ways I do miss those days I mean it's better now that everybody's much more... but this is just Brighton, not the rest of the country.

28.00 Do you think them and us has been.. more integrated now?

JB More diluted, much more diluted. In some respects I do regret and in other respects I don't. It has its advantages and disadvantages.

JB What's it like in Denmark?

28.21 Int: It's OK. I'm not that big a part of it, the gay community, several reasons. I haven't been out for many years. I never had the courage to ring up Switchboard. I had a girlfriend and we came out together. It's been a strength for us to be two. It's also been difficult for us to go out on the scene or make gay friends. So we sort of live in this little straight world, we've been very accepted, our family and friends, it's been lovely but as you say this need to have someone to talk to about your relationships and like-minded people.

JB That's it - like minded people – you had support. You might split up with your girlfriend and there'd be rows and tensions and tears but you'd still have support of someone to talk to. Which you do need.

Int: I think we were so concerned about our own relationship, our own identity crisis. It's a big thing. Even now. So it's only when we came to Brighton the second time round that we engaged in the lesbian community. But we're definitely going to take it with us home and try to do the same in Copenhagen because I need it. I didn't realise I needed it but I need it.

JB You do need it. To relate to someone that you know fully understands.

30.32 The community was stronger back then? Secrets? More built on secrets? Fun?

JB Probably look after your friends better because you needed to. You felt you needed to. Brighton was always – Gay Pride. I think the first Gay Pride was in the 90s because they started here as opposed to Madeira Drive. I do have to admit I think the people of Brighton are great and I am so sorry for the fans of our football club who have to put up with anti-gay comments everywhere they go. It's not on and hopefully the football world will deal with that. They're the ones who take the brunt of anti-gay feeling but they take it very well. I think really as a town we're just accepted. Gay Pride. This is why I'm so cross about having to buy tickets for the park because I used to like it when everybody could go. There was this wonderful sense of community. You get husbands wearing women's clothing walking hand in hand with their wives; couples holding hands, kissing, whatever, at the same time you got the chavs coming along but they all just fitted in. I loved that.

32.03 Was it more political back then?

JB C.H.E. I remember that when I was in Southampton. Probably was – had to be more political to be accepted. I think Pride was, was a bit smaller, but there'd be more: we're gay, we're proud of it. Not like now when it's more commercial and corporate companies want to cash in. Which I don't mind actually. Any advertising is better than no advertising. I know a lot of people say .... been financed by the

council ... Corporate companies do accept gay people now. I worked for BT and I do have to say that one of their policies was that there'd be no discrimination against anybody. Didn't matter who you were. If there was discrimination, any bullying, to please report it, we'll deal with it. Because of that it was win-win situation, because they kept the best people on. This is what I think all corporate companies are up to now and it's very good, thoroughly 100% behind that. I'm glad they've done it, it's for their benefit as well. It kills off bullying. It also makes other people realise everyone's equal, the same - if someone's gay, so what? And because they think that there's no discrimination, they are taught to think that there's no bullying in the workplace, therefore everyone's the same and you're accepted. Probably came in, I left BT last year, probably 10 years previously they realised being gay's good and makes people accepted. I like Pride a lot. ... wheel on the Switchboard, I love it because give people High 5s, pretty pissed by the time you get to the park. All pissed in London Road. It's a big, big party and it's great, just so sorry they had to introduce barricades. That's not on, should still be free. Should have done the buckets better.

34.29 Do you think there might be a risk that the community is demolishing or the positive word would be integrating?

JB Yes I think so. Unless something comes up. Unless, God forbid, AIDS was dreadful, the gay community really did suffer then. I remember that so well. Everyone really hating, well not so much down here, but the rest of the country. If it wasn't for Diana it would have lasted a lot longer, the way she sat and shook hands with someone with HIV and the beautiful publicised photograph of her doing that and because of her help I think it cut short the suffering that could have happened to lots of gay guys. You're gay you've got that gay plague. So she helped. It seems the shock of AIDS has petered off mainly because you can actually survive HIV with tablets, on medication for the rest of your life, it's not a killer now and of course it's not just being gay, it's heterosexual people, people realise it's not a gay disease. That was a bit precarious, I remember we didn't know what caused it. I'd recommended guys who were worried about HIV, I'd recommend them to the Claude Nichol Clinic to be tested and that was the right thing to do. I didn't know, it was just a guess, it was medical, go there. That was something.

36.58 I'm interested in what you say about the community, that you felt it was strong back then. Is there still a strong sense of community in Brighton? You're involved in Lesbian Link which primarily is for older lesbians. Is there interaction across the age groups? Is there still this sisterhood that looks out for each other?

JB I think really, I don't know many younger women. I know mostly older ones but that's my age group. I have to admit a couple of times I've been to the bars, the Candy Bar when it was around, and all the young ladies were drinking shots. It can't be healthy. The headache one must get the next day must be dreadful. So actually I'm more with my own age group really. I've been here what 30 odd years so all the people I've known when I was younger and grown up with. We've just got older. I don't know many of the younger ones. Faces keep changing. I live by the Grosvenor which is a lovely pub. Ali and Chrissie run it. Occasionally I meet up there for the

quiz night on Tuesday night. I suppose the younger ones do go there. Used to go to the Marlborough. Even I have to keep up with what is the in place to go. But people don't ask that anymore, they look on the internet.

Int: Find everything on line. I don't think there are many Lesbian bars. Not changed over the years.

JB Just the Marlborough and the Grosvenor. Plenty of gay bars to go to.

39.26 JB I think society has changed since I started on Switchboard. And thankfully we're growing, embracing the transgender community and a few more groups have joined us. We're going to be working with Mind Out now. Helping on the lines. Which is very exciting and a good idea. If we can help there. Makes perfect sense. Switchboard is in a good position now compared to two or three years ago when financially we were heading for disaster. Went out with buckets and advertising the fact we needed financing and we're now OK for the time being.

40.24 It's an important position, important function for Brighton.

JB I think so. Anybody seeing that, again coming out, needing to talk to someone - makes no difference if it's the 60s or 21<sup>st</sup> century you still need to talk to somebody. Someone you can identify with and empathise. Still plays a very important role.

40.59 I've heard in doing interviews a lot of people using the word Homeland or finding our tribe in the search for gay community, talking about Brighton and finding their homeland. Feeling at home and belonging to a place.

JB You belong to a community which obviously you don't if you're coming out and you're surrounded by heterosexual people. People who understand how you feel. Yes I'd say so. I still think Brighton's the best in the country. Working in the launderette where I work at weekends I've heard people say it's much more homely than London. That's not difficult as the centre of Brighton is so small compared to London. They feel at home. That's why I'm here, because I do feel safe. Very safe. I feel I can be me and that's so important to be able to live with yourself and be comfortable with yourself.

42.25 What sort of role does Brighton play in this? When you walk down the street - all the gay bars, rainbow flags and all that. Is that part of creating the safe environment or is it the fact that you know there are a lot of gay people living here?

JB Both really - it advertises it that's it's a safe gay place to be. For anybody coming down for a hen do or stag do, well the hens love it cos they try and get into the gay bars but the stag nighters it's a lesson ....sometimes they laugh. I'm glad they do because when I first started, a lot of gay bashing, you'd probably find with a group of people bashing gays you'd find that one of them would be gay and was trying to prove to themselves they weren't and that's a fact which is why I think it's good to advertise there are gay bars because the guy, this gay bashing guy can feel there is something I can do, it's not utter frustration, that I can't do anything about it, all my mates are heterosexual, would they understand? I think it's very important it's

advertised because we exist and we've got to let people know that we do exist. Whether someone from Haywards Heath, who's coming out, and thinking I'm gay, how must they feel walking round town, there's nothing to advertise that it's OK to be gay.

44.02 So it's important to have symbols?

JB Yes, absolutely. And there was a time when I first worked on switchboard, we were not allowed to say where it was but nowadays of course it's advertised at the community centre, that's where the office is and that's good because people know we are there. You're not alone. It's important to know.

44.38 JB Is Copenhagen still as gay as it used to be? Used to be very gay in the 70s, used to be a place to go.

Int: The thing about Copenhagen is that there are places to go and gay bars but it's not advertised, it's not very accessible.

JB In the 70s it used to be the place to go, not just for gays but for people who just wanted to find themselves, a bit like Amsterdam.

Int: It still has that sort of element to it. I don't know. It's diluted a bit and in many aspects that can be a good thing - you don't have to go to a gay bar specifically. Actually, at the second biggest city there's just been a discussion about Pride and they wanted to raise the rainbow flag at the City Hall. Wanted to use their flagpole. And they weren't allowed to do that. I read this article, it was quite offensive actually, you shouldn't celebrate a specific sexual behaviour, God knows who else will raise their flags. So living in Brighton now and seeing the flag everywhere, it's a bit shocking but sometimes that shock can be an eye-opener in a way because you realise even though you live in Brighton it's not the way it is everywhere, there's still a lot of work to be done.

JB Copenhagen was really open in the 70s. Sounds like it's gone backwards.

Int: A little bit. It's not as bad as I may present it.

JB But that's not a good reason - 10% of the population must be gay so they need to see it, that it's OK. Oh dear.

Int: That was part of the struggle, me and my partners, that you were wanted, you belong, and that can be quite difficult if you don't know where to go. So there's a still a bit of work to be done. Outside Brighton and maybe even in Brighton.

JB Could we have this conversation outside anywhere else?

47.54 Int: I know even that. I've been looking into differences between how young people perceive the community and the slightly older generation because they have experienced the changes over the years. I had a focus group with the Allsort Youth Project last week. It was brilliant, such nice people and they really engaged in the discussion. Very interesting the way they talked about history and the need to

remember history and also being a bit grateful in a way for the people who did it for them.

JB It's a bit like the votes in this country, the suffragettes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Emily Davison who, the anniversary of her rushing out and killing herself, well she didn't kill herself, the horse killed her, in front of the king's horse at the Epsom Derby and unfortunately women did get the vote only because of the First WW, a hollow victory, and yes every time I get a chance to vote I make sure I damn well go and vote because of what they did for us. And hopefully we did have our story project in Brighton but it seems to have gone quiet recently where we gave our mementoes and badges and everything from the days of 70s and 80s. My favourite badge incidentally which I liked wearing said 'how dare you assume I'm heterosexual'. I gave that away. So hopefully we've got records somewhere and it is sometimes rolled out at the library and we have Pride week and Winter Pride in February where they have exhibitions to remember the old days and also got a bit in Brighton Museum as well, if you go round the museum there's a bit about Brighton seaside and gay and the rest of it and show pictures of Pride.

INT: Integrated, it's a big part of this city's story.

JB Yes. I'm still really glad I'm working of switchboard after going through and seeing so many changes. And I've enjoyed the challenge of it

50.31 Lesbian Link – I tried to find it online and I found a page of it. Do you have an email list and go to meetings?

JB Put that in and if you want to join all you have to do is send an email off to an address on that page and then you get a social diary every 3 months of what's happening in those 3 months

Int: So what do you usually do when you meet up then?

We're meeting tonight. We meet up once a month in a pub which we're doing tonight. First Thursday of the month at the Regency. That's been going on for years ever since I first came to Brighton. The Lesbian Line used to have it and we just carried it on because it's a good social point for someone who wants to come out and meet other women who are gay. We also have Supper club, we meet up and have something to eat. We go to the dogs, little social events mainly for the older lesbian we've been around for years and all meet up and go out and enjoy ourselves but occasionally we get the odd new person, women. But not young. I don't know what the young do. Apart from social media I don't know cos as I say on Switchboard it's mainly emotional calls now and you don't get many young women saying where's the best place to go. I need to find out, I have to renew, have to keep in contact with what I do.

Int: I think maybe a lot of them go to Allsorts for the support they need.

JB I think you're right, under 26. The 26 – 40 somethings, I wonder what they do?

52.22 Int: Like a middle group. Can be a bit on their own.

JB Probably in relationships or going through relationships. All I hope is they don't all have civil partnerships immediately they meet their first lover. Otherwise this world will just be full of divorces, separations. Cos you're inclined to do that, when you think back, 'can't we live together forever'?

53.00 Might be a rise in marriage now that we can.

JB Have the Lords passed it?

Int: Not quite sure how long....

JB Yes, miserable buggers.

53.42 Int: Are you going to a birthday later on?

It's Celia, she's had her 70<sup>th</sup>. It's her birthday. I'm taking a cake to the pub tonight. You can come and join us. There are a few younger people. It's open to everybody.

Int: I'm definitely coming to the next Kenric meeting. What time do you meet?

7.30. Please do, I can introduce you to everybody. Might be a bit old. Charlotte and Lorraine will have napkins and stuff so if you've got a free evening, please drop by and I'll introduce you.

Int: I would love that. Definitely.

54.42 If you would like to tell a bit about your own story about being queer in Brighton. How do you feel about the word queer by the way?

JB I don't mind it. Queer I don't mind. I actually don't like lesbian very much. I suppose the usual. Arrived in 1980, had a few relationships. Loved someone in Holland very much and now I'm just happy living on my own. Probably a typical one. But I've had a good life in Brighton. Trouble is when you get older, I lost a couple of women I loved very much in 2007, to death, that's the only thing. I've enjoyed myself. I've been quite happy with my life. It's been a typical one I think. When I was younger, going out to the clubs. Used to go to the Longbranch Club along the old Steine.

INT: Is that still there?

JB Well not the club, no, the building is, it's more or less opposite the pavilion along the Grand Parade. For women, used to be run by Ros and Peggy. It was open every night. Of course Friday and Saturdays were the busiest nights. Got your usual argument, trouble with women they can get very emotional, between ... relationships. I've sort of enjoyed the Brighton life. There was the Sussex Club in Regency Square, that was women only, Marlborough, we had the Candy Bar for a while. I've probably lived the usual life between working, going out, socialising, having affairs. Now I'm more into doing the things I always wanted to do. Like go to an archaeology dig and generally just enjoy the sociability of friends. But I've enjoyed Brighton life over the years. The Dorset Arms, that used to be gay for women on Wednesdays. Well, at least

one half of the bar was, the rest of the bar was for everyone else. That was where we used to go, you know.

57.43 What was the atmosphere in Brighton at the time, among you and your friends. What sort of music did you listen to?

We listened to the New Romantics of 1980, Annie Lennox, Eurythmics, the music of the New Romantics, particular songs that meant something at that moment in time. We used to go out discoing, really used to love that. That was really great. Used to go to Caves, that was a disco, but they only had one toilet though, ladies only but you get a couple in there you've had it, queue. Banging on... 'get out'. It was good. The Rockium, that was a gay bar frequented by students as well so we used to go there. The Rockium became lion and lobster which is now heterosexual. Changing bars, clubs, things opened, closed. You just went to it and enjoyed it in between affairs.

59.27 What about family life?

My family are dotted all over the place, my parents sent all us children to boarding school, obviously wealthy enough to do that, so my family is dotted around the place.

Int: Within the UK?

JB Within the UK. My father lives up in the Lake District, he's still alive, I've got a sister in Yorkshire, a sister in Oxfordshire, and a brother in Kendal. So we're just used to not seeing each other, basically. That's why I can be so independent. Because of boarding school life is so sparse. If you were ever held hostage you wouldn't notice. I could live quite niggly because of that. Not spoiled at all with food. My family don't live here at all. They've been down to Brighton to visit me, of course. I go to visit my father every two months and I usually see my older sister and brother, nephews and nieces. That's nice. They've always lived far away so my family haven't been part of my gay life, I'm afraid. It's something I feel a bit sort of uncomfortable talking about, because you're born like that I suppose. As I say, in those days, never shit on your own doorstep, so that's why I buggered off. Had to, my mother was a doctor, good God, I couldn't stay in Bolton.

1.01 Was that also for her? Sort of protection?

JB Well she wasn't over the moon about my being gay. Of course parents weren't in those days. 'What?' You know. Obviously a disappointment. Never mind. But you've got to live your life as you need to live it.

Int: You created your own family here in Brighton.

JB I did, I certainly did, have done. I haven't really lost out that much. That's what it's been about I suppose.

1.01.38 You're staying put in Brighton?

Yes, I'm really happy where I live. I only live up there, my studio flat. No mortgage, no rent. Got the sea here, I'm really happy with it, so comfortable, so secure, now

thinking about retirement and to lead more of a life of leisure and hopefully still keep active at the same time.

Int: You're doing archaeological work?

JB I always wanted to do that. I joined the Brighton and Hove Arch society and they've got a dig up in Rocky Clump. Which is sort of Iron age Roman Britain. I didn't find anything yesterday. This is the first time I've done it. Hopefully next few times I'll find something. They found pig's teeth, they preserve so well. Bones of sorts, they have found a Roman coin and some samian ware, you know the very red Roman pottery that's usually made in France I think, or Gaule as it was. So now concentrating on what I'd like to do now I'm a bit more elderly. My Godson, my nephew promised me he'll dump me somewhere if I get too ancient. Make a lot of money and look after me. So that's fine. I hold him to that. I just want to enjoy life as much as possible and that's why I gave up work at BT. I want to be out in the sunshine and not stuck in an office behind a computer.

JB What are you going to do with your anthropology? What do you hope to do with it?

01.03. 41 Int: I haven't decided. I have to keep open-minded. There is a lot of unemployment as well as here. All the job market but especially anthropology has always been a bit fragile.

JB Is it the same in Denmark, you're facing austerity as well? The government's not spending as much as they'd like to on welfare?

.....

Yes, yes. It's discouraging finishing a long education to not have employment. Be satisfied with whatever comes along. I still have to write my thesis in a year. I still have some time to go.

JB Are your parents financing you?

INT: No I have funding from Denmark, sort of a scholarship, so we get 6 year funding, each month we get a payment from the government. Very lucky we can bring that with us. The fieldwork is part of the Masters. Anywhere we wanted to go. Obviously we decided to come to Brighton.

JB Have you got your partner with you?

INT: I have yes

JB Where are you both staying?

We rented a flat near Preston Circus. She's also studying, we met at uni. She's studying also in the gay community, lesbian parents.

JB Has she spoken to Natalie yet? On Switchboard? Because she and Betty were the first couple to have both their names on the birth certificate for their daughter Ellie-May. She'd be interested in that. So she's doing a thesis on that?

01.06.38 Yes. She'd be interested in that.