

Galop and Stonewall Housing Oral History Project

Interviewee: Martin Nicholson

Interviewer: Rasheed Rahman

Place of Interview: Galop Offices, Leroy House, London, N1

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Files: Galop Rasheed Rahman interviewing Martin Nicholson, part 1 of 1

Key

RR: = Interviewer, Rasheed Rahman

MN: = Interviewee, Martin Nicholson

[time e.g. 5:22] = inaudible word at this time

[5:22 1A] = inaudible section at this time

[Word 5:22] = best guess at word

RR: Where and when you were born?

MN: I was born up in the North West of England, a place called St Helens in 1968.

RR: OK Martin, could you start by telling me a little bit about your childhood, where you were born and growing up?

MN: Yep, I'm from an industrial village, an old mining village called Haydock, which is on the outskirts of St Helens, in the North West of England. It's a rugby town and in the 1970's and 1980's, my background was relatively working class and of course we went into a recession in those times as well, so both my parents lost their jobs; my dad in a factory and my mum in a hospital when I was about 11 years of age. So they were quite mature, my mum and dad were 41 when they had me, so they were in their fifties at this time. And I'm the youngest of seven children, with a significant age gap between me and the next youngest. My sister's 20 years older than me, my youngest brother is 10 years older than me. So six of them came in a ten year pod, my parents thought that was it, and then there was me, at the bottom. So I was brought up in a typical council house, the youngest of those kids, but we had very strong, good family values. All of my ... sister and four of my five brothers have all got kids; I think eighteen nephews and nieces at the last count and about, and this is the difficult figure to keep track on, I think we've got about twenty seven great nephews and nieces. Now I'm only 41, so that's unusual and the oldest of my great nephews and nieces is my goddaughter Holly and she's 17 and she's just moved in with her boyfriend. So I could be a great, great uncle within the next few years, no doubt that'll be the case. So yeah, that's what it's like, that's where I'm from.

RR: And you were at school in St Helens?

MN: Yeah I went to a Catholic school, St Mary's Roman Catholic Junior School, St Anselm's and then I went to De La Salle College to do my A-levels, I didn't go on to further education. I wanted different things when I was a 16 and 17 year old. I actually was interested in cookery and becoming a chef and I wasn't allowed to do that, I was siphoned into sixth form and of course I wasn't interested, I wasn't interested in the subjects I studied and I wasted that time and I knew I wasn't going to get the results that I was going to need to go onto

further education. So I started looking for other avenues of employment, 'cause I was a smart kid, just not applied at that time.

RR: What were the expectations of you?

MN: A teacher. Out of my siblings, the five brothers and my sister, two of my brothers are teachers and very well respected by my parents for that, going off to university and doing a degree and becoming a teacher was pretty much what I was supposed to do and it had been done. In fact it had been twice and stamping your mark in a family as the youngster of course, you don't want to follow in people's footsteps, well some people might, I didn't. So I came off and I decided I wanted to be a chef, I'm quite pleased that that didn't work out because in St Helens at the time there was probably one restaurant, clearly jobs would've been a premium <laughs>, and that was that. So yep, that's the ... that takes me up to being 18 of course. I had to start thinking about what else I wanted to do; I considered joining the navy and I considered joining the army. I also knew a couple of lads who'd come down to London to join the police and they came back and they talked to me about it and I decided that that was for me and I wanted to make an application to the police force. I was still just 18 at the time, or 18 and a half and it took me about a year to make that application and be successful and I joined the police just a month after my 19th birthday, or just two months after my 19th birthday in May 1987. So that brought me away from home for the first time, I went to Hendon, stayed there for five months and then I started to work at Sutton Borough where I funnily enough am again at the moment, after quite a few years break between.

RR: OK, and what was the move down to London like for you, fresh out of St Helens?

MN: It's great, it's very naive of course. A big city and bright lights. It was really good to join the police at that time because a lot of the people who were joining were my age, I made some very good friends who unfortunately I am not as in touch with as I have been over the years, but it has been twenty two years now, so that's to be expected I imagine. Now the Hendon was wonderful for me because the reasons for me wanting to be a cook is because my mother wasn't such a great cook despite having the six children <laughs> and even the bacon, egg, sausage tomatoes and chips that we got for breakfast, that was a surprise for me, getting chips for breakfast or sauté potatoes as the Southerners called them with breakfast. Well that was great, I certainly ate my fill of food that wasn't burnt which was marvellous! A progression. So Hendon was great. From Hendon, after the training and being a 19 year old straight out of A-level college, I obviously took the studying really easily, much more so than the 36 year old guy who'd been in the navy for 25 years and although he had much more experience and skills, I could do the exams without really much study or revision. So I enjoyed Hendon for that. The social side of Hendon was ... the educational side of Hendon for me was easy, the social side of it was great fun, all new to me as well. And then that progressed when I went to Tooting Section House, I was posted to Sutton Borough and I was living above Tooting Police Station, in the police accommodation there. And I lived there for about two years, two and a half years and it was in that time I allowed my sexuality to develop, come forward and it was very interesting.

- RR:** Let's pause there and hover around this time when moving to Hendon a little bit. I mean were your expectations of joining the police force and the training what you imagined or more than imagined or...
- MN:** I didn't really know what to expect and being a lively, cheeky, quite bright 19 year old lad, it was a lot of fun for me. So the lessons that we had day by day, for me it was more academic learning because I'd never really experienced the stuff that I was talking about. I'd never been a victim of crime, I'd never been a victim of criminal damage, didn't know any families where there'd been domestic violence, so I didn't know any people who'd been seriously assaulted. I heard stories and read about it in the newspaper, but I came from a big close family where these things just didn't happen. So it was very academic for me and of course I find that quite easy, despite my poor A-level results <chuckles>, I could still do quite well at the police, the police studying environment. So there was a bit of surrealism if you like, learning the Theft Act off by heart, learning the Public Order Act off by heart was a little bit more difficult and learning how to apply that to the scenarios and the practicals; it was all a little bit unreal. Of course that all changes when you leave Hendon, doesn't it, and you start getting the actual experience. Yeah...
- RR:** And so that brings us to Tooting then, when your actual experience ... is that right?
- MN:** The actual experience of leaving Hendon and going down to Sutton Borough?
- RR:** Ah, Sutton Borough.
- MN:** Yeah. So when I left Hendon and yeah, I went down to Sutton Borough to do my street duties. I would say that going to an outer borough at 19 was probably a handicap, because at the time there were a lot of people in that borough who were retiring. In fact I do remember the first day there and we had thirty years to do before our pension, been taking into see the community beat bobbies and they all had a little laugh and a joke and it must have been a regular thing. And there was about six really big, fat, red-cheeked, humorous happy men sat round in this room who covered areas like Cheam and Belmont and Carshalton and Wallington, none of which were high crime areas. And they started, and one of them said he had three years, two months and two days to go and he didn't envy us with our thirty to go. And then the next one scoffed at him and he said he had two years, two months and a day to go, and all the way round the six until the last guy, and there must have been a setup for his benefit which was a nice thing to do, said 'well it's really lovely to meet you on my last day, I've finished my 30 years and I could never have imagined on the day that I arrived the changes that would happen in the police and the things that being in this job would bring to my life and the quality that it would bring to me and my family, and the stories that I've got to tell you, I've got to tell people,' he said. 'It's been a wonderful job, I hope you enjoy it as much as I have and I hate to think what it's going to be like in 30 years,' and of course the changes are beyond probably anything that he saw; we've gone into a technological age, we've gone into an absolute age of diversity and equality as well. And I think that's probably one of the reasons while we're talking today. So if that office, whatever his name maybe, who was probably 55 years of age, 22 years ago, was sat next to me, we could tell some very different tales I'm sure.
- RR:** So we're up to 1988?

MN: Yeah towards 1988, yeah.

RR: And so you were in Sutton for how long?

MN: Two years. I had to complete my probation there, but I knew it wasn't for me. And also I came out towards the end of that time and it wasn't as comfortable as I expected it to be. There was a bit of trauma, as with everybody when they come out. I didn't come out to my family, I just came out to colleagues who I was living with at the section house. So the experience of working in Sutton for the first time was patrolling, foot patrol, usually on my own, sometimes doubled up in a vehicle dealing with pub fights, shop lifters mainly; I remember dealing with lots of shop lifters in the higher, lots of shop lifters everywhere. Sudden deaths; it was an old borough, so I was always at St Helier Hospital every couple of days dealing with a sudden death, non-suspicious sudden deaths of the elderly. No real incidents stick out to me as being ... oh yeah, there was a couple of fatal accidents that I dealt with, that was all new and quite traumatic and we had a couple of deaths that I reported which was quite serious and traumatic. One being a death of a quite wealthy family through carbon monoxide poisoning where mum and dad had died, dad must have realised what was happening and tried to get to his baby and didn't make it to his bedroom door. The nanny had died of carbon monoxide poisoning but being grateful for small mercies, the baby was still alive. So the baby was saved. And dealing with that kind of trauma and situation was big shocks as a new 19, 20 year old in the police. There was also an unexplained death that we reported of a 20 year old boy in Cheam, when we arrived, and we opened the door, the mother collapsed at my ... looking at me, she was saying 'my Lawrence, my Lawrence,' I think that was the name and I was a spitting image of her son who she just found dead in bed! And of course, 'cause of her distress, the officer who I was with asked me to wait outside, but I was curious, and when the coroner came in I showed him up to the room and I was quite shocked as well 'cause the similarity was very striking. And this ... I think he was a little bit younger than me, if I was 20 or 21, he was 19 or 20, and the coroner's verdict on his death was he died of cot death syndrome at that age. Yeah, there wasn't evidence of anything else untoward. So apparently that can happen. I've never really looked into it, but that was another incident where there was a little bit ... they give you the tenacity that you need; once you've dealt with these difficult situations, it's true, what doesn't kill you does make you stronger. So there's a couple of incidents that I can remember from back then which were quite serious, that were character-forming. And then when I was confirmed in the rank, I asked if I could move somewhere busy, so I went to Clapham.

RR: And you were saying it was around this time that your sexuality was starting to become more to the fore. When did you start acknowledging that to yourself, if you like, and how did your job and your working environment and your colleagues, in that environment...

MN: Yeah. Well without going into the personal detail of it, I mean I'd always expected that I wasn't turned on by the things that my friends were turned on by and never really was able to work that out and put it down to the fact that I'd never met the right woman as a teenager. None the less, images of semi naked men would do the job. So from an early teenage age I was aware, and buried, my sexuality. It was something I didn't even think about. As a teenager, as a 17, 18 year old at sixth form, there were things that made that clearer to me, so things that happened that made it much clearer to me. And

then when I came to the police I wasn't out or honest with myself about my sexuality. But when we were into the section house, there were two openly gay men there. They were the first people I'd ever met who were openly gay, who began to take me out to pubs and it was all done very secretly. There were three gay men in the section house, one of them was in the closet and two of them were open, and there's a picture of one of them, in your 1992 Galop. A couple of pictures of him, Tony Murphy. So anyway, he's in there somewhere, he's in your magazines. And he was doing a lot of liaison work with Galop at the time when I came out. So I took that step and eventually I admitted that I was bisexual and that's the last station on the way to gayville, isn't it really? And I just got on the train and never looked back <laughs> from there. I didn't stay at the bisexuality stage for very, very long and as soon as I went to gay clubs and gay bars and met other gay men my own age, then I came out. Now it leaked out in the section house. So news like that in 1989 got around and I was quite popular shall we say, so it didn't really bother me and I fronted it out and I could ... there was as much shock with some of the... My friends didn't care; my friends were very supportive. People who might have had an issue with it, I fronted it out 'cause I could probably get any girl that could have. And that's how I talked to them. So I didn't really have any ... I certainly didn't have any bullying or any homophobia. But you know that there's a whispering campaign, people will be talking, things get written on doors and stuff like that. But I was oblivious to it because I was having a good time and my attitude at the time was, 'well you've discovered yourself now, let's go have fun with it!' And did, and did. But all the time, without going into too much personal detail, discovered my sexuality, discovered the gay scene and spent the last 21 one years seeking the perfect relationship. So that's where I'm at with that side of things.

RR: And you mentioned one of the other gay officers in your station house was already doing some liaison work with Galop?

MN: Yes, he was.

RR: Is that how you first came to know about Galop's organisation?

MN: Funnily enough, no. I would've found that out later. I knew Tony was doing that kind of work and also we were setting up the lesbian and gay police association at the same time as well. No, I was a young man. I think I was still 20 at the time and the politics of it weren't interesting to me at all; the fun of it was interesting to me. And starting off LAGPA, I soon realised that everybody who was joining it was older and a lot of the people who were joining it were joining it because they had issues and some of the issues were clearly because of their personality and their performance, rather than their sexuality. And it was quite easy for me to make those judgements as a popular young man who was getting on with and being accepted, because I think I'm at that moment in time where perceptions and attitudes really changed. I can say that the majority of people older than me were homophobic, were less accepting of sexual deviance in any way, shape or form, deviances from what they considered to be the norm. And people younger than me have always pretty much been not homophobic, and decreasing as we get to this generation, people don't care at all. And the people who were older than me have been brought round slowly but surely, it's been really easy with people younger than me. And I see that, I see that in my work and I see that in my family and I see that in society as a whole. I've lost my point a little bit, do you want to bring me back?

RR: Yes, we were talking about how you first came to find out Galop.

MN: Galop. So yeah, so as a result of all those things considered, I wasn't really interested in the politics. So glad Tony was doing that, but I thought my view was, 'I think I'm popular because I get on with my job, I do my job, I do it to the best that I can, my sexuality is secondary to it, I like to keep it like that.' And I didn't like to mix the two, that's fine. I don't think I enjoy it, and I still probably don't enjoy it and call me old fashioned, if people come into work and start talking about everything that's going on with their missus and everything that's going on at home. For me, my work's my work. So I didn't get involved so much in LAGPA after the initial stages and for similar reasons I didn't get involved in LGBT liaison for a couple of years. I found out about Galop when I was ... I worked in Clapham, so there were two brewers in Clapham and there was a couple of pubs in Vauxhall. I think we had ... of course the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, I think Adrella was working there at the time, maybe even Lily Savage, I'm not sure, I think this might just be at the end of the Lily Savage days. I think it was Raig Leeson, was the licensee, god rest his soul. The Market Tavern was up and running and I can't remember the two fellows that ran that place. But they had ... there was need for a pub watch, there was a lot of homophobic violence going on around Vauxhall and Galop had brought ... and in particular Jeremy Clark who was one of the research workers in Galop, had brought together the licensees and started a forum. And they were meeting regularly with Philip and Kevin, again god rest their souls, certainly I know Philip's passed away, I don't know whether Kevin's still with us or not, last I heard, about ten years ago he was running another pub somewhere in London. But they used to have regular meetings, coordinated by Galop at the brewers for all the licensees and anybody who'd been a victim of crime to come along. There was a sergeant who asked me to go down there as an openly gay man because he wanted to introduce me as a link, if you like. And he basically introduced me as a link and then left me to it, fine, he had no knowledge or expertise or interest in the job. So I think you can probably say that in 1992 or 1993, I became the first unofficial liaison officer for that group. And there was no monitoring; no monitoring of homophobic crime, there was no liaison with any sections of the community really. We dealt with people if they called us and reported crimes. There was no engagement, none of that. And there was very much an attitude of we give anybody special treatment, we treat everybody the same; start treating one section of the community different, you have to treat everybody different and where will we go then, what will happen then? But the forum was very hostile when it first started, people would come and they would shout at, they'd be attacked or whatever else, they didn't the police, they didn't know what we did, they thought we were really homophobic and I wasn't experienced in that, I wasn't experienced in that with my colleagues. In fact I've had, in the 22 years of being a police officer, three incidents of homophobia directed against me, all by horrible people. People who were disliked by everybody and weren't picking on me because I'm gay, just 'cause they're that kind of person, they get their kicks from being horrible. So I wasn't experienced in that, so I was probably a very positive link person at those forum meetings and Jeremy would chair the meetings and people would report crimes, I'd go back and take the report back and they'd get assigned through the CID in the normal ways and we'd get crimes investigated. And I think also Jeremy would put people in touch with me as very much the same way as Galop works now, putting people in touch with me who'd reported to Galop, if it happened in my area, but me touch and we'd take a crime report and we'd start dealing with it. But there was no such thing as ... it was all on paper, there was on

computers, there was no such thing as a homophobic mark on there to monitor it, and that all came in a few years later. But for me, there was a sea change. There used to be a cruising zone in the old fridge. There was a big fridge, a big cooling shed up in Vauxhall, it's gone now, St George's Wharf Flats are there. But this place was a death trap. Apparently there were holes that went from the fourth floor down to the basement and fell down there and hurt themselves quite regularly. There was quite a common story of St Katherine of cold store was one of the stories at the time. A little anecdote about somebody who had fallen down and was hanging on for dear life by their fingernails and everybody had run away because when these things happen and people started shouting for help they were always expecting the police to come and raid it and people get nicked and somebody dressed in drag as a nun pulled the guy up and rescued him and was known as then on in and St Katherine of the cold store. So that was a dangerous place for people to go cruising. So as well as dealing with the victims and putting victims in touch with investigators and being a link for gay victims and going round to see gay victims, as a separate point of contact from the investigating officer, we were also looking at issues like that. And I had to work with Galop and the owners of the place to stop people cruising in there because people were getting hurt and there was a real risk people were going to get killed. At the same time, other LO's or other people were getting ... the LAGPA was starting, so there was a point of reference for gay officers and the Ireland murder ... the serial killer, Ireland had just starting doing all of his murders from The Coleherne and ...

RR: Colin Ireland.

MN: Yeah Colin Ireland. So we were asked to go man the phones, and we did a little bit of that. So there was little bits of use was made of the officers from LAGPA and the people who were out in the police, and it was very early days. So it was all great. I made some great friends! I made some really good friends at the time. I really did, Philip and Kevin particularly at the two brewers were really good.

RR: So is this group run from the Galop office or was it...

MN: It was all held at the ... I'm pretty confident that Jeremy had put it together. I'm pretty sure that Jeremy had started it and got these licensees together. There were a couple of other people came and went. There was a gay venue opened up at Battersea Arts Centre in Clapham junction, but it closed down, so we had him along. There was other venues that opened up and closed down. The Little Apple up in Kennington Road, that opened up and closed down, so we got them along. So there was different licensees coming and having a little bit of contact with us and I gave a report of all of the homophobic crimes that happened. Now some of the more significant stuff that I did, there was a series of homophobic robberies going on at Vauxhall. It'd probably been going on forever and day, but the victims started to come forward a little bit more, came through the licensees, we started to get more information from the community and actually I setup, as far as I'm aware, the very first police operation in a number of years which was purposefully directed at arresting this guy who was quite seriously violently attacking and robbing gay men at Vauxhall and we got him. Now don't ask me the fellow's name, it was 19 years ago, but we got him and he was also sentenced as well and he put some people in hospital while he was robbing them as well. He befriended people walking down the street, when they got to a dark place he

would attack them, and it was a series of linked offences. Now that was through the information that had come from the pub watch that we got those reports that we were able to do something about it. There was a little bit humming and haring in resistance, there was some discomfort about me setting this thing and getting the other police officers involved and how they were going to deal with the victims and the suspects, but it was good.

RR: It sounds very proactive of these groups that were specifically formed to address a problem that had been...

MN: There'd been nothing before. There hadn't been a coordinated, structured link between the police, in Lambeth in many years, as far as I'm aware. There had been interaction of victim, when it was bad enough to report it to the police, all disconnected. But nothing, as far as I'm aware, nothing ever came as joined up as that before. We also did another proactive robbery initiative in Clapham Park Road, 'cause a gay pub opened up there. It had been ... yeah, Clapham Park Road, it was ... I dunno what it is now, it's a fancy pub now, I think it was called The Clock, or The Clock House at the time and it was a young licensee and it had been an estate pub for the William Bonney Estate. So all the people from the William Bonney Estate started having a go at the new clientele for this gay pub which they didn't want in the area; they already two brewers, why did they want that? So we did a little bit of operation there. I don't think we arrested many, I don't think we arrested anybody significant, but we certainly stopped it, and again it was reassuring for the people who were using The Clock House and we did all with the licensee, with observations post in the pub and vehicles plotted around in the area where people were getting attached. So you could see that we were actively investigating beyond the investigation. We were doing more about the wider problem for the first time. And of course, things have developed from strength to strength. I mean if a linked series of any crime is established, then we will do that kind of proactive work. So yeah, they were exciting days with new stuff happening. I'm trying to think of what else happened. I mean I started the Lambeth LGBT forum, that pub watch developed into the LGBT forum. And I think the Lambeth LGBT forum is probably one of the most successful biggest ones that we have now. We've got a full time liaison officer there I understand, Andy Hewlett took over that role from me a few years ago, a good few years ago and I've been doing it as a part-time job for about three or four years before Andy took it over. And then he did it as a part time job and then he was made full time and went onto Graham and whoever else is doing it now, I don't know. But I'm quite proud of that, it's a bit of a legacy. I didn't know of anybody else who was doing it anywhere else at the time, no doubt they were in West London, potentially North London and Hampstead and other places. But as far as South London's concerned, I didn't know anybody else who was doing it.

RR: So did that become formally part of your job, or was that still...

MN: No, it was always an add-on for me. It was always, always an add-on. No, I started to seek promotion. When I was in the community role I could pay more time and attention to the LGBT role, I was a beat officer in Clapham Common. So of course public sex and all that, discussing public sex with police officer at meetings and discussing public sex environments with my bosses, it was all very new, it was learning, I didn't know which end to come from. I didn't like it personally because I thought we've got the two brewers down the street, if people want to meet for sex, why don't they go there, meet and go home.

Why do they have to do it ... Because I thought it was, more than anything, public sex damaged the reputation of gay men, that was my belief and it still is to some extent, although I prefer that people didn't have public sex, but I understand the reasons why people do. So I am less harsh in my opinions now. But exploring all those issues of why people have public sex, trying to talk to officers about that and then balancing the threat to people who were being seriously assaulted and killed on a regular basis whilst engaging in public sex. And saying, even if people are engaged in criminal activities in public sex, or some people would say moral or activities, doesn't mean that they can be murdered for it and we don't do anything about it. So there was lots of interesting conversations and very quick developments as well. I was one of the first few officers who went up to Clapham Common doing some witness appeals. I think that work again, it was with Galop or with Outdoor Lads or Lads or something like that I think the organisation was. And we went up with 'be careful, because somebody's coming round here every weekend beating gay men up, so if you're cruising, if you've got to cruise, do it safely, tell somebody where you are, let people know when you're going to be home, don't take any risks.' And then from there of course developed the ... I don't know which order it came in, but then of course the safe sex campaigns came at pretty much the same time. So people would be going out talking about safe sex, giving out condoms with police officers there as well, which again, it'd been impossible to imagine that kind of thing was going to happen a couple of years earlier. So it was all interesting to see and good to see as well.

RR: So it sounds like you came in at a particular moment then when ... I suppose the question I have of the 1980's is quite a different response by policing. But you say your role was always unofficial, an add-on. How did your superiors see the allocation of resources if you like to this dedicated activity.

MN: We didn't have any liaison officers for any other sections of the community. We just didn't have a woman's officer or a BME liaison officer or a faith and belief liaison officer. It was something that the Lesbian and Gay Police Association started just before the Black Police Association. We were ahead there. We still don't have officially, as far as I'm aware, LO for the other five diversity strands that we have in the MET. So I'm just starting that down in Sutton. I don't know whether anybody else is doing it in other boroughs, you could probably tell me, but I've now got three officers, well I've got about five officers who volunteer for LGBT LO work. I've got three officers for age, three more for gender, three more for BME, three more for disability, three more for faith and belief. So we've actually got the equality that people have been without for many, many years. So my bosses at the time were grateful that I did this as an extra work, and it wasn't too much of a struggle as a community police officer. But when I back to the team, I just couldn't do it anymore. When you're working earlies, lates and nights, I tried to do it and I couldn't. And I think it lapsed for a little bit in Lambeth and I think it was probably picked up by Andy Hewlett who was doing something else in Stretton similar, when Lambeth was three boroughs. I think there was somebody in Brixton called Tony, Andy Hewlett in Streatham and me in Kennington and Clapham. I think when the borough amalgamated Andy got the role for the borough and he was a community officer and I think he was ... you'll need to talk to Andy. You'll need to talk to Andy Hewlett if you haven't already, and he'll be able to pick up from that point of what he did. 'Cause he took it in leaps and bounds, he became the first full time liaison officer. So he put the business case together and I helped him put the business case together and I think he might

have been the first fulltime LO for the MET as well. But you'll have to talk to him about it. So yeah, they were grateful and I was grateful. One of the fun things that happened; we were having some rights at Pride March, was in Kennington Park, the Pride Park, Kennington Park and it moved to Brockwell Park, South Lambeth, and then we had some rights parties in Kennington Park which then moved to Brockwell Park and obviously I got to, if I wasn't going enjoying it, I played a lead part in the organisation and I went up to brief commanders about public order. It was on Clapham Common to just talk about my experiences at the previous events. And if you want a humorous anecdote, one particular event, which was with Jeremy as the lead steward, so I think he might have been ... he must have been involved in the organisation somehow, it was a summer rights party and I was the only police officer in the park. My boss had taken the courageous decision that the actually Kennington Park was going to be policed by stewards with me as the lead steward, the lead steward had radio link with everyone else and that there would be officers in carriers if I needed them. So we were going to allow, for the very first time, the event to police itself. I thought it was great, it was a great step. There wasn't any misunderstanding of oppressive police presence, so all of the conflict was just taken out of the event and it was great, I had a wonderful day. We obviously had to go and check all the tents and there was a **39.02 fish** tent there as well, so that was interesting going into the fish tent and talking to Susie Cruger about what was going on in there that day. And that'll all remain firmly between us <laughs>. But there was one particularly thing that really made me laugh, and it's a story I do tell at dinner from time to time. There was a transvestite, a party transvestite, probably not fulltime, in a glamorous frock and make-up and wig had taken a shine to me. I was probably about 23 or 24 and kept coming up throughout the day talking to me, but as the day went on, the make-up ran, but the alcohol had flowed and the gay got a little bit more drunken. And during the day I'd seen loads of my mates, because I was social person, I was always out, loads of my mates were partying there and I was on duty in uniform, the only copper there, so I got some kudos for that, I really thoroughly enjoyed it. But at the end of the event when people were clearing off and it had been a long day, the tranny had spotted me from a distance and I'd noted that there was gonna be trouble there. And I got this man in full drag, running up to me, arms up, 'there you are, there you are, coming to me darling, come to me darling!' Pissed as a fart. Of course my alarm bells started to ring, and as a young police officer in uniform I did exactly what I shouldn't have done and I ran <laughs> away! So there was a bit of a Benny Hill moment with the music was playing in my head, dur dur diddle dur, dur dur dur, with me running away with the guy in drag chasing me off in heels, you can imagine the scene and I didn't know what to do. So I was going to run around the stalls that were just being cleared and there was a little rail between the grass and the footpath, it was only six inches off the floor and I just hopped it without even noticing it and went round the back of this stall. Of course the man in drag didn't see it, hit it, went flying, landed on his back in a big pile of boxes and bin bags, wig half off, mascara down his cheeks. And I thought thank god for that, I've made my lucky escape and all I could hear in the background was 'don't leave me like this, don't leave me like this darling, don't leave me like this!' <Laughs> I made good my escape, found the senior steward and I think I clocked off and went home then. <Laughs> But you know, that's a great fun story. I can't imagine that kind of thing happening to most other police officers. Nobody else could've been in that position to have done that job and it was only because I'd been there for a few years and the relationships that I'd built up with the public. There was DTPM tents there, there was fist tents there, any

other officer would've just been alarmed and would've been calling in this backup all the time, going 'oh my god, we've got two woman with skin heads and noise piercings touching each other in the back of tents, please I need backup!' <Laughs> They wouldn't have managed it. In fact ... yeah, yeah. So the only time I did call anyone in there was because the DTPM tent wouldn't close, so I had to, and that was part of my briefing; the DTPM was having a ball, everybody had gone DTPM tent, they wouldn't have it from me, so I said 'OK, call the boss in.' And a couple of serials came round and closed the DTPM tent down, took fifteen twenty minutes longer, they got what they wanted, there was big cheers, everybody had a good time and a good party! So another one of the positives there.

If was to think about the negatives about it, <pause> sometimes it was difficult convincing people about the seriousness of the investigation and how to treat ... and I'd be disappointed about how victims had been initially treated. But I also was realistic about it being a learning experience for the organisation and it had been a learning experience for the individuals as well. I didn't hear, and I don't know of much true homophobia in the police, I really don't. Police officers don't ... in my experience and around me and whether that's because they're around me or not, I don't know. I know it happens, I know you have reports of it, but around me I've seen very, very little evidence of it. And that makes me quite proud as well. And I can't say it's because there's not out and out homophobia out there, but people have certainly respected my beliefs in my 22 years.

RR: In terms of the instance of crimes that were being reported, did you see any change in this specific area?

MN: Well the big sea change came when I really wasn't doing the LO's job. When we started to get homophobically motivated crime monitoring, there was all of the media about that, there was a big ... the tide came in, in some respects. People...

RR: When was this?

MN: I can't ... what could we say, 1994, 1995 would you say, that it actually all started really happening. And it was the first ... race crime and homophobic crime seemed to come along together and I can't remember which one came first. I will probably guess it was racial incidents that we reported first, and then homophobic and it was just a little box on the paper sheet that we put in. When the crimes started to go on to the computer system, of course by that time we had it sussed. I think we had definitions for what is a race crime, what is a homophobic crime, we had an agreed definition, so everybody knew. And the police were really keen to put stuff on as homophobic crime, which the victim didn't feel was homophobic. You see that to this day. Where I'm working currently at Sutton, out of the 10 or so, 10 to 15 homophobic crimes that were recorded, about five are the victims are straight people who were called gay during the attack, so that fits under the homophobic umbrella if you like, homophobic definitions umbrella and therefore it's treated as such. So I mean I can't really tell you the day, date, time, place when we said homophobic incidents all get reported, or get monitored. I do remember pulling them all off the system and it being much easier to pull them all off the computers for an analysis and for feedbacks for meetings and stuff. And I don't really remember any resistance to it either. I think when it came in, in my area, if somebody had a sniff that it was homophobic they would treat it as

such and they would go out of their way to inform me, get the CSU to deal with it. I'm sure there's been failings, but I personally thought it went well.

RR: The CSU is?

MN: The CSU, did I say CSU? Community Safety Unit.

RR: OK.

MN: Community Safety Unit, who have a special responsibility for dealing with hate crimes.

RR: Right OK. And specifically talking about Galop as an organisation and their role in that intermediary role between the public and the police, can you talk a bit about that?

MN: The only real ... I've probably spoke about the areas where we worked together; the pub watch of course. It was Galop's idea, I was probably the first ... as far as I remember, it was Jeremy's idea, he took me along, I worked with Jeremy, we sat next to each other as almost like the lead organisations if you like. Previous to that point, I understood Galop to be a pressure group who was against the police who caused more trouble for the police and was quite surprised, only by reputation ... not even by reputation, only by the very snippets of information that I knew, 'cause I didn't know much. But I saw it is as a really good partnership from day one, from absolutely from day one. I was there, Jeremy was there, the minutes we'd agreed, Jeremy kept the minutes, everything that had been brought up over the last meeting we would discuss what's been happening, how the investigation's gone, I'd invite the investigating officer down or I'd do a report. Never really had an friction about anything at those meetings. The engagement events of course were on the back of those meetings, all of the pride meetings and the stuff that the ... particularly that summer rights where I worked with Jeremy. I went up to his offices at Old Queen Street about three or four times to run through the plan, so I'd know what he was doing on the day, so I could feedback to my boss, so they could make the policing plan for it. And that was again, it was all really good partnership, it all worked really well. I don't remember there being many people in the office at the time. I don't remember there being that many Galopers. In fact I only really remember Jeremy. I remember that when Jeremy left there'd been Bridget, was a girl. Bridget was a lady who came shortly after I think, she was a Scottish girl and a name in one of these rang a bell. Philip Derbyshire and Paul Berson ring a bell but I never really dealt with them directly. I always dealt with Jeremy Clark, and he still owes me a coat! And that's another thing that we did together as part of the pub watch, before the summer rights festival in Kennington Park we done a stall, a joint stall, a partnership stall in Kennington Park and...

RR: Is this an awareness raising?

MN: It was Brockwell Park sorry, it was Pride, at Gay Pride, in Brockwell Park. I was asked by Galop to come along on their stall in uniform as a gay liaison officer and this was ... I've got a picture of it at home actually, I've probably got pictures of me and Jeremy somewhere and the stall. But I've still got a picture framed of me <laughs> at Pride, 'cause it was a momentous moment, no one had ever done that before. And it was a couple of years after that the other people who'd come along after me who'd made the LAGPA, the Gay

Police Association and took the organisation of it all to the levels that it's at right now. They came along and they started demanding that we be at Pride and in some respects I was in opposition to it, because I'd had a good day, nobody was really bothered about seeing me there, there was no issues and it was a fun day for me, it was a laugh. And I didn't realise the value of engagement and flying the flag at the time, I do now. And I would've definitely been on side of doing more of it with more of us. But in some respects there's a little bit of niceness about being the only gay in the village <laughs> in Pride Park. So that was ... god knows when that was. I think I'd say I was ... I think I'd say I was 23 or 24, and 1991, 1992, 1993 again. And that was when I had most of the fun. From there on I went on back to teams to seek promotion and the only real LGBT that I've done is in Sutton, recently.

RR: And that's now?

MN: Yeah, and that's now. And that's ... it's a bit repetitive. It's almost like history repeating in some respects because it's an area where there are gay people, there are issues, but not everyone's in denial of it. There wasn't a starting point, starting it from scratch, meeting a few people, getting them enthusiastic, it was a similar thing back then. There is a bit in-between, sorry, there was a bit in-between that I forget about. There was ... I worked at Vauxhall, I was Sheriff of Vauxhall and Oval. So I had responsibility for the Vauxhall Tavern, for Hoist, for Crash, the nightclub as it was at the time, and The Little Apple and a couple of other places. And they had a small pub watch, a Vauxhall pub watch running at the time, run by Kerry who's now the manager of one of the bars up there. So I had some input then, it wasn't a huge input, but I do remember turning up on a Sunday afternoon on duty at the Vauxhall Tavern in my van and my friends were there and they came and sat in the van and had a bit of a laugh and a giggle, which was fun. But that's just a little aside. I can't really say that there was ... oh we did launch the ... I'm saying we didn't really do too much. We did launch the LGBT forum thoroughly across the borough at Lambeth Town Hall. So that was ... there was myself and Kerry and oh, now that period of time's hazy!

RR: When are we now...

MN: '90 ... I was a sergeant, I'd gone back as a sergeant so '98 ... no, 2000, 2001 maybe. And we had a big launch. I was playing rugby so it was 2001, 2002. So we'd gone back and there was pub watch going which I got a little bit involved with. We took it to the Town Hall, we got some of the counsellors involved, and we had a launch in Lambeth Town Hall to officially launch the LGBT forum. We presented them with the rainbow flag, we got a day assigned as a LGBT day which they still fly the flag on. Brian Paddock was borough commander. Simon Foyer had been the borough commander 'cause we'd had a build up to this official launch; we'd had a couple of meetings in the Town Hall before. I forget about this 'cause it's politics; it doesn't float my boat as much because it's more political. But Simon Foyer had been our borough commander. A very, very supportive borough commander and then we went on to do a big launch in the meeting rooms up there. I can't remember who the mayor was, I think it was Claudette Hewitt and she came along and did a speech and Brian Paddock came along and did quite a good speech. A good friend of mine had been a victim of quite a serious homophobic violence and he came up and did a bit of a speech and we had a couple of other people talking about, and I think we had 200, 250, 300 people at that launch. You're probably better going to the Lambeth Council records

for that and any records of who was there and what was said and perhaps Graham Alldus or Andy Hewlett will have some more ... I think Andy was involved in that, but I don't remember to what extent. And that had been much more of a community ... that was a forum that was established that I just went back to as a sergeant when I went back to the area. My mind's very cloudy. I'd just started playing rugby, so there was a lot of booze being drunk ... yeah <laughs>, a lot of drinking yeah.

RR: I'm interested in your initial impressions from within the police of Galop going from this pressure group and being antagonistic with the MET to this period where you actually started working together. Do you have any sense of when that changed or was that down to individuals?

MN: Personally I think that was the start of it. I think that was the start of it, because I was a gay police officer with an insight into the gay life and in Clapham, and in Vauxhall, and Lambert, where I'd been a police officer for a number of years, so I could see both sides of the coin and I think it's just one of those time and place things. If I hadn't been there, somebody else would've done it shortly afterwards no doubt. But I never went in with any preconceived ideas of Galap because as a gay man in that environment, I wouldn't have. I don't remember ... I don't think anybody would've dared warn me off them or tell me to be careful what I said, because I've always been quite an open and honest person about everything and I think I've always thought that's how you win trust and confidence; you say it as it is. Of course, not having any prejudices and enjoying being a police officer, without an axes to grind in either part, it works. So I think probably those pub watches and the people getting involved in the events we got involved in and policing the events that grew and grew and grew and policing the ... doing the operations, targeting homophobic violence, that's just developed. Pre '92, I mean the stuff you've got in here which I had a quick look at where there was ... I have no experience of it at all, never had any, and I've never dealt with any police officers who did. So you could see me as a fresh point in time as a police officer who's come in, you can mark me as coming in at the time when it was good. Now whether it was different in different parts of London, whether there was still battles going on with officers ... well there probably was battles going on with community safety units and officers who had been responsible for dealing with homophobic crime everywhere else, because they probably weren't gay. I remember when the LGBT liaison officer role, I got quite frustrated with and still get quite frustrated with it in some respects, for totally different reasons. <Cough> When the LO role started yeah, there were people who I knew didn't have a clue about anything gay, what so ever. Family men, people who worked in domestic violence, community safety, domestic side of it for many years, getting another strong to their bow, putting a bit of evidence on their application for promotion or transfer, that kind of stuff. But also, they were the natural person to select because there weren't that many officers and also there was frustration around, 'do you need to be a gay officer to be able to do the job?' That kind of question needs to be asked and answered, and yes, you do get qualifications and experience in your life; it helps you deal and relate to other gay people much better than straight people would in those situations. Although it's doable; it's a professional organisation, so it should be doable. But also on the other hand, I met people who were totally inappropriate as being LO's because they get asked to do 'cause they're gay, or offer to do it because they're gay, and give a load of rubbish advice and don't know the organisation well enough. In fact I met a PCSO last week who is an 18 year old who ... I met him because he was my

... my best mate's a teacher and he was a bit of an unruly troublesome kid at school and my mate was really pleased that he'd got a job and he saw that he'd become a PCSO and the next time he saw him he said 'oh I'm now a LGBT liaison officer as well.' Well what can you tell a victim of crime about how we investigate homophobic crime, what advice are you getting to help you, to help victims, understand what we do? And are you building expectation's in victims, are you giving them the right information, what experience have you got? So it's almost like a badge to wear if you're gay and as a police officer, 'I'm an LO.' So I've got problems with that and I've also got problems with ... it's got to be the right person doing the right job and sometimes I think that ... I'm only guess 'cause I've not got any experience on it, but I'm guessing that could cause a huge...

RR: What incidents is the LO role most vital do you think?

MN: Depends what you...

RR: When does it come into its own?

MN: Flexible. You've got to be flexible in that role. If we're talking about fulltime officers, well yeah they've got ... we should have some standard operating procedures regarding engagement tactics, education tactics, enforcement tactics, liaison tactics, and I think there are quite rightly so. I think the most important job of any community link is winning trust and confidence in a community, making sure that the issues that are raised are taken to the right place to be dealt with, dealt with and then are fed back to the area that they came from. So examples of that in Lambeth now, we've got a huge gay community growing from nothing. Well not from nothing, we've got a lot of gay history in Vauxhall as well. But it's just ... it's just exploded yeah; everything that opens is a new gay bar, isn't it, or a new gay club and it's 24/7 near enough. And we're taking, from Westminster, I think it's almost as gay in Vauxhall as it is in Old Compton Street, isn't it now, or Earls Court, probably more so. So there's definitely a job, a fulltime job there for somebody building strong links with the community to prevent stuff that's going on with G overdosing and people getting sick on drugs and drug misuse happening in the clubs, and all of the dealing that must be going on and the criminal activity that's connected to that. So it depends where you are, 'cause everything that effects society is affecting the gay community and sometimes magnified, I would suggest as well. It's a different question to answer; 'what's the most important role?' It depends where you are. In Sutton, now, where I am, it's just establishing somewhere for people to go where they have got some problems, when they feel insecure, just to know they're not alone, that in Sutton there are other gay people and that any policies that come out from the council or the police are going to get looked at from people in that forum to make sure that they're gay friendly and that they don't negatively affect their lifestyles. So an entirely different level of ... entirely different priorities where ever you are. So it's a difficult one to answer <laughs>.

RR: I think we've actually covered quite a lot. Oh, tell me about...

MN: I can talk, can't it? <Laughs>

RR: Yeah, no, it's all great stuff! Yeah, can you tell me a little bit about the LGBT community as a...

MN: As a developing community?

RR: Yeah and how you personally...

MN: In London?

RR: Yeah in London yeah, how you see that change and also your respective experience obviously.

MN: OK. I suppose I can only really ... my perspective as a police officer comes from the fact that I am a police officer. I did mention earlier on that when I find my sexuality aged 20, 21, I went out and enjoyed it. And I enjoyed going to Compton's in Old Compton Street for a few drinks and then going to Heaven; that was my thing and I did it for years. And people knew I was a police officer in Heaven. I wasn't particularly bothered about it or ashamed of it. But of course, people would treat me differently because I'm a police officer, people liked it and loved it, some people kept well away from me. I had no idea at the time as a young man that half of the doorman were trouble makers and had been in and out of trouble, I didn't find out until much later on. And I always got on really, really well with them all. So the thing to do back there in 1989 was to go to the club and the clubs all shut at two.

RR: Oh yes.

MN: Was it, we was all on the way home at two o'clock. <Laughs> And then people started having parties, going back to parties behind their house and bits and pieces. And now of course, it is 24/7. You find somewhere to go whether it be a sauna, a club, a pub, a community centre ... 'cause it's in my older priorities there <laughs>. Sauna's not the number one, I've been to two saunas in my life, I didn't like either time. So yeah, there's stuff to do all over, stuff to do all over the place and it's good. I do think the community's outgrown itself in many respects and I draw parallel to the Portuguese community in Lambeth. The Portuguese community were a very close knit community all the way through to the 1990's, but there's 20,000 Portuguese people in Lambeth or something like that. They never needed any help, they never needed any assistance, they worked well together. But then the much younger ... the kids going to Lambeth schools were getting involved in crime, getting involved in drugs, the Portuguese people didn't know how to deal with it, came to the police, didn't know how to deal with the police and there's probably a generation of Portuguese kids out there that are not dealing with their parents, and not dealing with the police, and not dealing with society. So trying to take that to an expanding LGBT community and ... well you see, it's expanding in Vauxhall, but it's probably shrinking in other places. It's almost now that there's not so much of an issue; we're much more accepted. I've seen people holding hands today, or was it yesterday, and my partner said, 'Oh you don't see that very often in Crystal Palace,' and I went 'what?' Looked around and he said 'those guys there holding hands.' And I'd seen them, it just hadn't registered that they were holding hands and they were two guys, because it had become so normal. There are issues about morality of course, whether the boundaries are pushed in places like ... my friend is a teacher where we went past ... me and my partner when we went past the Vauxhall Tavern yesterday, he thought that was a bad show. People out in the afternoon, covered, all shirtless, all covered in tattoos, all drinking, clearly been out all weekend and he thought that could do damage to our section of the community. And I suppose there's some merit in what he's saying as well

if he feels like that. So I dunno, again it's another difficult question to answer, it's become so mainstream. I've got a gay PC on my team at work, he openly talks about his sexuality all the time. I don't, I'm a supervisor so I think it's probably a little bit less appropriate for me to do that, although they know I'm gay, they know about my partner and I've always been out at work. PCSO's joining at 18 can be open about it, and it's all through the police, and I'm presuming, all through society and it wouldn't have been the same 20 years ago, would it? We have integrated and I would say we've integrated quite successfully, 'cause I'd say there are less ... it appears to me that there are less seriously homophobic motivated, truly homophobic motivated incidents now than there used to be. It would've been OK in many parts of society to beat somebody 'cause they're gay. I'd say that's not the case anymore. It does make me said in schools that I think homophobia is still the method of insulting people, calling people gay, or if anything wrong it's gay; that's a childish thing and a lot of work's been done to combat that and I think we've still got a way to go. What will they depend on if they don't call people gay? Dunno. We've done disabled jokes, we've done racist jokes, they're doing gay jokes, what's gonna be next? I dunno.

RR: Go, on carry on.

MN: So I think inclusion, now you've made me think about it a little bit, I think I'm happy, I'm happy that we have gone a long way in 20 years. There is a lot more integration, there seems to be a lot less trouble from my perspective, although of course I don't think it'll ever always go away; I think there will always be homophobic people and there's of course the whole issues with religion versus homosexuality and we can save that for another day maybe <laughs>. We need a good few hours for that one, don't we?

RR: And Galop's role now, and then, and in-between?

MN: I've got an awful lot of respect, a total respect and I have done from day one for what Galop have done because I've never seen anything bad of it. In those early days when I did that work, it was together, I got a lot of help and gave a link to Galop. I can say, and you'll have to speak to ... I dunno, is Jeremy still with us, god bless him?

RR: I don't know.

MN: There's a picture of him in here, with Tony somewhere. I have a feeling ... there he is, that's Tony and that's Jeremy in the picture up on the top right-hand side; he was one of the PCs who was in my section house with me, Tony Murphy. I know he's still a police officer and I know he could be available for interview if you want to. Jeremy of course, he was the guy I did all the work with and it was just a success. So I can't say that I've ... I've always had the upmost respect because of that. But seeing how Galop has developed from strength to strength to strength and is on top of all the issues that still need to be on top of, I know you're doing it for me, it gives me some confidence, it gives me a lot of confidence and security and a lot of trust in the organisation. I think it needs ... it was an absolute catalyst in getting that link started with the police, as being one of those early linking police officers and it continues, we'll always need that mediation, we'll always have people in the community who've never had any dealings with the police whose first ... 'Cause let's face it, what's our job? When do we met people? It's not a nice job. We worry about our public attitude surveys. Some people might say,

'You're a police officer, nobody's going to really like you for the job that you do, you only ever see people when they're at their worst, and you see people when they're committing crime or when they're a victim of crime usually and you're never really going to get the best of anybody.' It's very nice when you get to go to these occasions like Pride and summer rights and smile and be happy and have a great day, but my core job is dealing with criminals and victims of crime. And people are not at their best and sometimes need to be treated differently. There are people that we're never going to win back and so there's always going to be a need for mediation, there's always going to be a need for an organisation to take an independent level view of how it's happening and how victims of crime are being treated, to point out the mistakes that we're making, to bring the police and the community in line with changes, because if there isn't we'll start going backwards, that's for sure. So I'm very supportive of Galop and any other organisation that comes in and does that mediation 'cause it's very difficult to do and you're stood there in uniform in front of somebody who's had a bad experience or whose friend's had a bad experience or has only ever seen what's on News 24 about G20 for example. So for me, it's good. And long may you continue for another 25 years, congratulations on these and 25 years and 25 years and 25 years on top of that <laughs>.

RR: Martin, thank you very much.

MN: OK, is that OK?

<End of recording>