

Paul Collins

6.12.16

Minutes	
Track One	<i>Tell me about yourself and your family background.</i>
1.30	Grandad was a miner. Retired. He came from Ireland, Co Tyrone, and worked at Hatfield. Before that, his wife died in Scotland, he moved to Newcastle, to No Place. My friend Joyce, her nanna lived in No Place. I went there and I told my grandad and he said he'd lived there. A small world. Joyce's nanna would have known my grandad. After Newcastle he moved to Hatfield.
3.00	<i>He came as a miner?</i> Yes, that's where the work was. Lived in Dunscroft, where I was brought up. My mum and dad never worked, both heavy drinkers, it was rough growing up. It was squalor where I grew up. Everybody had nappies and baked bean tins in the gardens. Nettles knocking on the windows. It was 1980s. We didn't have a vacuum cleaner. Didn't have carpets or rugs.
4.00	<i>For a period of time the miners earned quite well, so what you're describing is a bit different from that.</i> The miners got money but there was a big unemployment element. A lot of attitude among teenagers where we didn't want work, me included. Music opened up a world for me where I wanted to travel. A bit of a free spirit. I don't think it was politics, they didn't want to work, they stole money.
4.30	<i>Where did you go to school?</i> Hatfield High. <i>What was it like?</i>
5.30	Scary at first. A lot stricter, you got caned, girls weren't allowed to wear make up or jewellery. White socks and skirts, and blazers for the lads. I didn't do badly at school, I twagged it a lot. Thought sod this. Pretty good standard of education there. It's changed a lot. I had to go back into education 3 years ago. I'm a qualified teacher now. Technology is a big factor.
7.30	A mobile phone in 1983 would have been science fiction. Dunscroft was very basic. The miners were different, if you had a car or colour telly you were posh, or a nice home. We were a bit jealous because we didn't have it. <i>You knew who the miners' kids were?</i> Dunscroft was smaller then. It's built up now, a lot of gypsies have moved in as well. It was a mining community when I was small. Late 1970s there were pit houses, my grandad's was. Then he changed over to council later.
8.30	Born 1967. Aged 17 during the strike. <i>What did you feel about the mine growing up?</i> I didn't care because it wasn't part of my heritage, it was my grandad's. I just wanted to see bands. <i>Did he talk to you about it?</i> Sometimes. The conditions down there. He said things had changed. My ex dad-in-law worked down Hatfield pit, he was a marshall. Told me just how it was. Miners would scrub each other's backs in showers. They all had eyeliner! A few said Hatfield was a doddle. Sometimes they would play cards through a shift. But it depended what area of work you were in. <i>You didn't really want to know?</i>

9.30	I thought being a miner would cramp my style. I wore leather jeans, had long hair, wore eyeliner. Snobby detachment. It came from visiting my uncles in Balby when I was a kid in the 1970s. My older cousin got into this new thing called punk. It was exciting, because these villages in the 1970s, it was crap. There was nothing to do. It gave colour. When the strike happened, I didn't know how serious it was until Jubilee Bridge at Hatfield we were stood on there, my mates and me, and a massive convoy came past, line after line of
11.30	police. Then we saw things on telly. Then we took more notice. I was caught in one of the riots at Hatfield when I went to sign on, on the bus. It was a double decker. The bus had to detour. There were horses. Whole families would come out and battle with them, throwing bricks and jeering. I've never forgotten the noise. I watched a film called The Price of Coal from the 1970s. There was a documentary from Hatfield and I cried and felt proud. I felt that they were my people. The effort. <i>What your suggesting is that it wasn't until you saw it, and having it verified by the media, before that you didn't really engage with it at all.</i> No. <i>Presumably some of your mates' families were involved?</i> Lots of people. <i>Did they not talk to you about it?</i>
13.30	No, because I was the village weirdo. An outcast. The only one wearing a Victorian dress! To do that in a pit village in 1984 you'd need a Victoria Cross. But everybody knew me. I was fetched up hard. My mum was psychotic,
15.00	nobody would cross her. We travelled a lot, me and Joyce. Somebody got stabbed at a club, and the police were at the front, interviewing us all. When I said Dunscroft the police said they didn't want our sort there, we should fuck
17.00	off back to Doncaster. Punk was exciting music, dynamic. It came from the streets. I started dressing well. Joyce had a nice Victorian dress. I had long black hair, and it fit lovely on me. I went to Donny in it. A rocker started on me and I had him by the throat.
19.30	My mam hated it. She wanted a normal son. Always had rows, batterings. When I was 10 I watched her cut her wrists over a bowl. She was asking me how deep to go, and I didn't know what to say. She was extremely violent. She
20.30	set fire to my dad. She died at 55, my dad died at 60. Getting out of Dunscroft was my escape. My sister was abused by my dad. <i>You seem remarkably calm about it now.</i>
21.30	I've lived with it all my life. I've got bi-polar. I've been taught how to live with it, through therapy. I got married then divorced, got 2 beautiful kids, well
23.15	mannered. I taught them a work ethic. It's generational. I had no problem with bullies at school because I was fetched up hard. But I was very quiet at High School, the grey man, I didn't mix, I preferred it. 4 of us were a group. <i>Did you get in trouble at school with the teachers?</i> No I was very good at school. I bunked out. <i>Was it about trying to escape Dunscroft? Or home?</i>
24.30	Both. After seeing London and travelling... even now, I wouldn't want to live there again. I live in Bentley now. I went on a few coal runs during the strike, nicking coal off slagheaps. With a push rod and a sack. And joining in. I had had enough after 3 runs. <i>A group of you going up there?</i>

26.00	You knew everyone in the village. You'd smash up the big lumps. But my grandad was still getting free monthly coal, because he was retired. My mum sent me round to fill the pram up. People were ripping sheds down to burn, carpets, my mam used to burn jumpers, owt she could get her hands on. <i>Your mum and dad were on benefits?</i> The strike benefited them really. To the point you could go on the slag heaps and get coal. She never went to the food banks, they were for miners.
27.00	Supermarkets were donating, the pub donated. They tried to do everything for the kids. I was a bit confused about them all drinking beer in the pub though. But fair play to them. <i>You didn't get involved in the pickets?</i> I wasn't politically minded then.
28.00	<i>So the rebellion was a generation rebellion rather than a class rebellion.</i> Yes I think so. But as you get older you change. I didn't feel it was my thing. <i>What did you think about Thatcher?</i> Hated her. She destroyed that community. I hated her at the time. I knew what she was doing. There were families not talking to each other, whose known each other for years, still won't to this day. That's how deep it is. I was in Duncroft the other week, Mark was there who'd been on strike and the police were there for some reason, he said 'I still haven't forgotten what them bastards did to us'. There's still that hatred towards cops as well to some degree. It's still talked about, but there's nothing left. The kids are oblivious about what went off. The older generation mention it, it shouldn't be forgotten.
29.00	<i>You spent a few years travelling, a roadie for bands?</i> Yes, about 10. I got a guitar and tried to play but I was crap. I was travelling on the dole. I knew people around the country so had somewhere to stay. In 1989 I stopped because I was burnt out. There was a photo of me in the Kit-Kat Club, a bondage club in London. You had to take your own booze in. There was a fella wrapped in clingfilm naked. I had leather hipsters on, crawling on all fours, eyeliner on, pissed. Millions of stories on the gig front. Followed band called Alien Sex Fiend. Couldn't meet a nicer bloke, and his wife on keyboards. We went to the front and by then I'd had all my hair cut off. Singer said 'get round the back later'. Joyce would chat blokes up for drinks, then do a runner.
30.30	Birmingham we had three or four lads chasing us. We were hiding in car parks. My body was wrecked with drinking.
33.00	And I got a job, spraying chemicals, with Fisons on Hatfield Moors. I wanted a change, and my own money. I didn't want to be controlled. And I stopped drinking for a year. I told Joyce I wasn't doing it any more. Then I met my ex-wife. I was living with my sister.
34.45	I don't know what brought me back to Duncroft. But Joyce was there, we were like soulmates, still are, even though she passed away 3 weeks ago. It's a massive loss to me. We did everything together from age 13.
35.30	
37.30	
Track Two	
2.00	In the 1980s there was a party at Joyce's house and everybody there were larger than life characters, somebody would be doing a monologue, it was like a play. Col was my mate, a punk, was a year older than me, and Joyce up the road from him was 15. He said she was into the same music as us. She was very shy. I took a shine to her straightaway but she always knocked me back. I was 16 but I looked older. I invited her to Leeds, which seemed like New York, to watch

3.00	Alien Sex Fiend. She paid. She was 2 years older than me. We went to Leeds Warehouse. It was a fantastic night. I got glassed, because I was fighting. I had long hair but for the gig I had it shaved at the sides, and spiked. Looked like a bog brush. Joyce crawled over the stage and I went too. I saw Mick wiping his make up off. I said I wanted compensation and he laughed. Joyce got off with the drummer. He got me onto Alice Cooper that night, I'm a massive fan. I kipped on the streets and was sick on the bus on the way home. Went to Retford the week after and was on the guest list forever. She was old enough to go out but I wasn't. We had 10 years of not seeing each other, and when I saw her again she looked like Dot Cotton, I was shocked, she was haggard, green teeth, but she had looked like a model. Joyce had moved out of the village and she didn't know who I was. When we met we were close again, like nothing had changed. She said she knew she'd have hurt me before, and ruined our friendship. I thought that was lovely. Joyce always did shop work, and managing it. At 16 she worked in Butlins. She paid for me all the time. She said I reminded her of a stray dog that you had to feed.
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8.00	<i>What happened after you took the job?</i> Only did 6 weeks, spraying chemicals, then worked at the chicken factory at Thorne. Left and got married and was on sick for years with mental health. I had a mental breakdown. You don't notice it when it's you, other people notice. I shut down. We broke up, then I started working on road gangs round the country, putting traffic lights in. I had therapy. Had a fine line between mental health and bizarre creativity. It blurred. I feel alright now. Had psychotherapy. My son is 23, my daughter is 18. Daughter works and son's at college. I got a new partner then went downhill again. I was living in Bentley from 2004. I got access to the children once a fortnight. I went to the dole to see disability officers, and went to the Sure Trust, they were fantastic. I went on loads of courses, got a placement at Pioneer Social Enterprise, paid by Sure Trust for 6 months. Then I signed on, but stayed at Pioneer to this day. They help the community with food banks, we run courses. I took NVQs and I'm a qualified NVQ assessor. I can give a bit back, I do it voluntary, to get people motivated. My family and community made me what I am. I feel good about it. I like to turn negatives into positives. How I have been fetched up has shaped me, I am very anti-violence. Makes you appreciate what you've got. Up until 5 years ago I felt I hated people, didn't want to mix, blamed other people. Now I just want to give back to the community.
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	For me, the people with money didn't look down on you, they had nothing to prove. It's new money that say, 'look what I've got'. I found religion as well. I've always been pulled towards it. I read from a young age, read the Bible. Two years ago it was getting stronger, so I got ordained with the UCL online. Universal Life Church. That helps me through. I feel stronger with my faith, to help others. It's one of the jigsaw pieces, my spirituality. I don't feel Jesus was the son of God, he was just a good prophet. It's given me a lot of strength and self-belief. I think I've been drifting for years, running. This is the foundation. I feel more rounded, and solid as a person.
	I'm still a drifter. I want to stay in work. I want to find peace and contentment. The key to me is acceptance. That was a guy at Pioneer who was very bad with his nerves, slim and mousy, timid. I was a gardener there then, but I'm on the Board of Directors now, but the supervisor was a nasty piece of work. This guy couldn't couple up a hosepipe and this supervisor was swearing at him. I got

23.30	him out of the way and told him to stay with me. I told him not to panic, I didn't mind showing him how to do it. I became a supervisor and had him by me all the time. Kerry the teacher was crying because of the pressure and I gave her a hug. They said I had an amazing ability with people. I can help people. And this is from a person who'd rather not mix, even now. I don't have visitors at home,
25.30	I like my own peace and space. My dad fetched me up, telling me that I was nothing and that I'd never work. I don't owe him anything, I've done it all myself.