

Interview with Daniel, 13/3/20

D: Growing up LGBT in Harrogate, it was because, I'm thirty so, I mean it's not it's not like long long ago, I don't mean that. But it was, people, it weren't talked about, it weren't spoken about like people speak, people talk about LGBT issues now. You know, it was very much still kind of in the closet, unless you went to Leeds, then it was, everybody was like open.

When you came back on the train to Harrogate through the big tunnel, the big long tunnel at Horsforth, and you get through and you get into the, all the grassland and everything you like, it was like coming back in time then, because nobody kind of really spoke about LGBT issues.

Until now, and it's like when I was at school I used to get called gay. I used to get, once I got called a faggot, and I was friends with a lesbian. She was my best friend at school. She got called, I remember, I never will forget when we was going up the stairs at school, I got shouted 'gay' and 'queer' and she got called 'man-beast'. So, stuff like that, you know, growing up.

So, but I still went out and enjoyed myself, and there was still a group that went out and we, you know, came out into Harrogate, enjoyed ourselves. When me and my friend, we used to get the train over to Leeds when we are younger and we used to go out to Queen's Court and that when we were like 14, but I know that's really bad, you know, 'cause we was underage and stuff.

Yeah but like I said, there's no, even to this day, there's no gay scene in Harrogate, you know. Me, Leonora and Poppy, we started the Pride, well I jumped on the bandwagon before the first pride then, but yeah, we started that. Ever since we've started doing pride, that has been a bigger interest in the LGBT community in Harrogate, and it's become more open now.

But when I was, when I was like, when I just turned 19, Yorkshire MESMAC started the first gay youth group in Harrogate, which me and my friend went to, but even then right it was only like four of us that used to go. And then that finished. And I think it's only just recently started up again.

So, yeah, and then I used to go through to Leeds a lot. You know

like I said that was where my first gay pride I went to in Leeds. Yeah there was nothing, nothing here at all, and there still isn't, but there has been times where they've tried to do stuff. I mean once they tried, I think about 10 years now, maybe 11 years, yeah I were 19 at the time so probably 11 years. And they did do a gay night in Harrogate. Just, they did it for about a few, a couple of nights because it was once a month at Viper Rooms. And even that went down with a flop. You know, the organizer got a coach from Leeds and picked people up in Leeds to come over to Harrogate, but it never took off. So, you know.

But I've never when I was growing up I never really encountered much prejudice against gays here. I mean, obviously, yeah there was a time when me, I got called gay and a faggot by unsavory people at school, but, you know, the majority of people have been fine. You know, but like I say now it's just becoming more, you can see the presence of LGBT issues in Harrogate because through Pride in Diversity, and I think that's had a big impact on young people's lives round here.

And so like my, my niece and nephew, they go to the school that I went to in Knaresborough, King James, and my niece tells me now, you know, they've got LGBT posters and stuff up in school and she comes to gay pride with me, as my niece you know, and it's great and it's all change, change for the better.

But, yeah, but when I was at school it was still evolving. I think it was in the last stages of evolving. But, I mean, in the last stages of evolving as in from something taboo, but now it's evolving into something more positive now. So yeah, I think that the way things are going now is great, but for me, back when I was younger, it was seen as wrong. And 'cause I grew up in a strong Italian Catholic family, I was like, I realized when I was 14, that I was gay. But I was like, [sighs] I can't , I can't be, I can't be gay. You know, I thought it were wrong, and even when looking at stuff online like straight porn, can I say?

I: Say what you want.

D: Well, straight porn, online, and I thought oh God, this is sick, you know. And then I was like oh yeah, let's go back to gay porn, you know, fine. And I used to watch on Sky, when I was younger, when I was like 14, we used to have gay TV on Freeview at 10 o'clock at night. And I used to go into my bedroom and put that on, obviously!

And yeah, I used to, you know, it was only 10 minutes worth, but, you know, when you're 14 you're like [gasps], you see a guy with like hard muscles and that, in, you know, in his tight pants and you're like oof.

But yeah, and then, and then I used to listen to guys at school and they was like "ohhh, you know, have you seen Babe Station?" and what have you, and I'm like "What, what the hell?" You know like, yeah, God, God forbid they know what I'm looking at, because they would have had a field day at taking the mick out of me.

But yeah, since I was my niece and my nephew's age, because they were, they're 14, 15 now, since I were their age, things have changed for the better, changed a lot for the better. So, and it's just gonna keep going upwards, you know so, you know, it's, and it's like my niece, now she's, she's one of, you know. I'm proud of her because she's like, she's like a trendsetter in a way, you know, she's the first girl to wear, because at the school where I went to, the boys had their blazer and trousers, and the girls had their skirt, well it was a kilt and tights. And my niece she's like, "no, I'm not doing that", she's now, she's now got the rules changed where now the girls can wear what the boys wear. So yeah, she's so, yeah I'm really proud of her for that.

But yeah, but I do, I do wish it was like that when I were younger, but, you know, it's just one of them things. So yeah, and yeah just you know, now just living, living here, living my life now, like you know, as what I wanna be, instead of when I were younger hiding it. 'Cause I never came out, I didn't come out until I was 18. So, those years, when I was a teenager, were hard, very hard. But, you know, looking back on it now. I wish I had the strength that I have now, 'cause now I don't give a shit, what anyone thinks, you know. But, when I was younger I thought "oh, might be something wrong with me", you know. Which yeah, you know. Everything's, like I say, everything's changing, but changing for the better, and attitudes are evolving. And it's just, just going to get better.

Transcribed by Yuzhu Xue and Lydia Kingston