I’m the daughter of an RUC officer who joined in 1953 until 1985; he was very much a bobby. When the troubles started, he had been in the police quite a long time, as a constable… then he got the chance to move into plainclothes, and was part of what would today I suppose be called CSI, but back then was called SOC (which was Scenes of Crime) alongside both mapping and photography, gathering the evidence after various events had happened.

I have various sorts of feelings about that because… my father’s job before that… you knew where he was stationed, and he was in uniform and… you just didn’t really think about it, like pre-troubles, dad would’ve actually gone to work in his uniform, on his bicycle, or his motorbike… later on, when he became plainclothes the ‘troubles’ had started, he was based at headquarters in Belfast… but they were on call to go out to any incidents anywhere in Northern Ireland.

So you didn’t know which ones he had been called out to… and… you didn’t know where he was, and his hours weren’t the same either, you know it was… flexible, I don’t even know if that’s the right word for it, it was beyond that… because unfortunately crime and terrorism doesn’t happen as nice nine to five stuff, and at the scenes of some of these incidents… where dreadful things happened you… could have been there a short period of time or a very long period of time, depending on the levels of evidence, and what had to be… mapped out and drawn out.

One of the things I remember from the very early troubles would have been that dad was now in a car, you know, ‘cause he was going all over the place, and in the front glove compartment or shelf in the car… he had a giant block of chalk and a giant block of yellow crayon… and I asked dad what they were for… I must have been ten or eleven, and he told me that… the chalk was for a dry day and the crayon was for a wet day, and he said he used them for drawing round things, so… didn’t necessarily say it was for drawing round bits of bodies, and what have you, but you knew that that’s what it was, because… you’d have seen on the news then… various incidents being reported and you’d have seen the stuff, you know, the circles drawn around all the different parts of evidence and that was just… part of life.

Father became very security conscious, we all had locks on our bedroom doors in the house, we knew where his gun was, and we had frosted glass in the front door. We were told not to… if somebody came to the door at night and we weren’t expecting anybody… that we would go to a side window, and look out the side window to see who was at the door, before we would open it.

My parents built an extension to the back of the house… and basically we lived at the back of the house, what had been the ‘good room’, you know the front room, wasn’t used for a very long time, it was just too… visible, or too open to the road… so we all lived in the extension at the back of the house… and that became our living room, and what have you.
Knowing that my father would have been across the border and, and going out to the border, because a lot of incidents were happening, along the Fermanagh and Armagh border, bottom of County Down as well, so you knew, you knew that he was sort of going to these hotspots... but one of the things that made you feel possibly a little bit better was the fact that you knew that he was going post incident, he was going after something had happened... and you just hoped that he was never... the incident that happened, and he was fortunate... he's a survivor.

Another aspect of it is, I can remember... not that long ago, so... sort of 2012, something like that... we wanted to do a day trip... and I suggested that we go down to south Armagh, Ring of Gullion, 'cause it's incredibly beautiful scenery... but, but it is an area that would not have been a good area to have been in if you're a member of the security forces... and we thought we'd go down there for a day trip, and we're down and we've... gone in the car to the top of the mountain and the views are absolutely spectacular... and my father said... 'oh', and looking out over the scenery, my father pointing out, 'oh, see down there' and recalling or remembering incidents that he had been to, which were all visible from this mountain and saying that... it wouldn't have been... somewhere that he would have ever put on a list of places to visit, but he was quite pleased he'd gone... because today... although the security risks are still there, they're nowhere near the same levels as they had been many years ago... and... and it was nice to see it with a different set of eyes on, that you weren't looking out for your... snipers or trip wires... booby traps and things, which were also rife at one point... so that was nice, it was nice to see him... see an area... with different eyes on... to be able to see the beauty of it, but it also makes you realise just the... levels of hyper vigilance... the perception of threat... the risk assessments... that we all lived through... and not just my father, because he was my father, but all of us, we all went like that, you know?

We had a lockup routine... at home, before I got married... about making sure the doors were locked, windows closed, et cetera, et cetera... and... when I first got married... my husband was a fresh air fanatic, windows open here there and everywhere, and the first six months he would have left his bedroom door open... and I'm coming from... a household where you closed the door, and not only did you close the bedroom door, you locked it, so to now be, so newly married... in a house, the windows are open, to let the fresh air in, in the bedroom, the bedroom door's open... and... you're going, 'ah... no, I think we need to close the windows, you need to close the door'... and what have you, and it took quite a while for me to break the habits, and I have to say even now, I've never got to the stage of leaving doors open, all the doors have to be closed, that's still something that I have, and even in our house now, I would still have downstairs or certain doors that are locked... because our risk assessment was that if anybody tried to break into the house, and they came through the back of the house into the house, there were two doors, if we had them locked... would mean that they would have to break through them before... they could get to anywhere else in the house, which would give us time to call the police, so we've two doors with locks on them internally on the ground floor... which were to impede progress of... and it's, I suppose part of... that is coming from a family where you thought about things like that... you thought about
how do you slow people down, how do you create barriers or boundaries and that was just how life was...

[Recording ends]