**Jackie Clayton & Yvette Lewis**

**Interview by Ray Larman**

**15th July 2019**

RL: This is Ray Larman for West Yorkshire Queer Stories. It is the 15th of July 2019 and I’m with Jackie, who’s going to introduce herself first of all.

JC: Okay, well I’m Jackie Clayton. I lived in Leeds a long time ago. I was very actively involved in the Lesbian & Gay Society at Leeds University and Section 28 happened and I became very politicised and I got involved in a charity that we called Intentional Promotions, which was specifically designed to intentionally promote homosexuality, and it turned into a touring market stall, which we went all round the country with.

RL: Could you tell me how you identify and how old you are?

JC: Okay, well, I’m 51 and – I’m a lesbian.

RL: Okay. Yvette, do you wanna introduce yourself?

YL: Yeah, I’m Yvette Lewis. I used to help Jackie deliver the Pink Papers. I’m 47 now, and I live in Leeds, and I identify myself as a lesbian.

RL: Okay, brilliant. So, Jackie – Intentional Promotions – where did that whole idea come from?

JC: The idea really started – I was in the Lesbian & Gay Society – it was December actually – as we first found out about Clause 28, and everybody, like we just felt really sh\*\*\*\*, it was a really sh\*\*\*\*time to be around and we were really isolated and lonely. And a few of us that had found each other were finally starting to feel okay, and then the law was proposed and it just felt like the biggest blow in the world. And I remember standing up at the Gay Society, cos we were discussing we should do something and we didn’t know what to do. And I stood up, and I remember saying, ‘I want to intentionally promote homosexuality’. I shocked myself, I shocked everybody else, I remember doing that, because it was like, ‘we can’t do that, that’s just wrong’. But I just thought if they’re accusing that of us anyway then we might as well just do it. And then the plan was to try and work out how to do it, which we didn’t know.

RL: So, was this ’87 or ’88 then?

JC: It was about – I don’t know really, early December ’87, cos that’s when we first found out about it. And then we went into the Christmas break while we all thought about it and we came back in the January and we decided we needed to do something. So we all piled down to London really early on a march and things and saw people and it was amazing and we got to see some of the old GLF badges, the Gay Liberation Front stuff, and thought, ‘we wanna do something’. And we knew there was a badge machine at the university, so we decided to start making big badges and we sat round and collected slogans and… Because we’d planned an Awareness Week, we always had an Awareness Week, a Lesbian and Gay Awareness Week in February, the end of February. And this year we moved it, that year, so we would have the Leeds march on the 6th, we did like the march against Section 28 and we had the university Awareness Week the week before, so could accumulate in the march. And before that, we prepared a series of badges… things… I’m trying to remember some of them.

The bestseller though was, ‘I’m straight, but it might just be a phase’, because one of the things we really concentrated on, we realised there were so few of us that were out – because most of the people in the Society didn’t want to be outed, they wanted to stay in the closet. There were so few of us willing to be out, we thought we need support from straights, or anybody else. So we specifically designed badges that said things like, ‘Some of my best friends are gay’, ‘Some of my best friends are lesbian’, and they sold absolutely loads, we were absolutely shocked when we set up the stall running, we thought we’d get beaten up, really. We did have some trouble, but we had enough people around and we were safe and we couldn’t believe how many people wanted to support us. That was a bigger shock. But they’d never had a chance to have a voice before. And so we went running through from that.

And as we continued on, because everybody – we did big badges, everybody wanted smaller badges cos they looked cooler. So we decided to do a second range of badges with the money we’d made from the first one. I mean, there were lots of things that were really difficult as we, not everybody would print the slogans, so we went inhouse to the university print shop, where we were really limited with what we could do to make sure we could get all of the slogans we needed for the badges.

RL: Oh okay, so they were saying they wouldn’t print everything?

JC: They did it, the university print shop did it, they were really supportive and really good.  
  
RL: But other places weren’t happy about it?

JC: If we were to go out, they didn’t want to print, so they wouldn’t do it. Eventually Rob, who I was doing this with, we were the two people who got involved the most and really wanted to do it – he was actually an ex-student and he was working in the print shop, he was a designer there, so he was a graphic designer, and he did all the designs for all the badges, and is marvellous.

RL: How did you come up with the slogans? Were all of them new?

JC: All of the slogans came out of our lives, from the p- cos we discussed it at the Gay Society, we discussed what was – things directly out of our lives. So there’s the phase thing, everybody was just saying, ‘oh it’s just a phase’, and we just thought, we’ll turn it round. And, often we would hear as well, ‘oh some of my best friends are gay’, and that was one we heard time and time again. And so most of what was said to us was, actually excluded women, we decided we wanted to explicitly say, ‘gay and lesbian’ so that women would have a lot bigger visibility. And when we were doing it, we were thinking, ‘the key thing we want, more than anything else, is we want visibility. We want to stop being hidden, because if we’ve – if we can be seen, people will know how many it really is’. And that was one of the big driving forces.

RL: So, you started doing the, kind of the stall at Leeds University?

JC: It’s, they had Denim Day, actually, we did a Denim Day, which I don’t think I mentioned that. So, it’s an old GLF idea that you say at university, everybody who’s wearing denim supports lesbian and gay rights. And we knew when we did that, so we did it, it was actually 26th of February, it was the Friday before our Awareness Week started, which is when we first set up the stall with the board to say, okay we’re going to be really confrontational and see what happens. We set up opposite where the security was, so they could watch us, because we did expect trouble. And people did come in and have a real go and be really, really angry with us because they had to go home and get changed, because they were wearing jeans, which I thought was hilarious cos it’s kinda like, y’know, it’s not a real thing, we’ve just said this, you don’t have to believe it, but they took it really seriously and were really angry with us, and we watched people really avoid us – they would go completely the other side of the entrance so they didn’t have to come anywhere near us to walk past, which was also reasonable. But then also we watched them looking furtively towards the stall, thinking, we know they want to come and talk to us, but they couldn’t because it was too public and too visible.

RL: So, what did the stall look like? Did you have banners and?

JC: We had a table and the Intentional Promotions board was sat in the middle of it. We had leaflets and information for people to take about what we were up to, and behind it we had a big like poster board that we’d put behind it, a really lightweight one that we could just balance behind it with posters on and announcing that today was Denim Day, so everybody that came in the building could see that straight away. So it did look quite good, cos Rob, I have to say, he would set up the stall and he’s incredibly artistic, and he would always design it and put it all together really well, so – and we wanted always that it would be a man and a woman that were stood there so it wasn’t just mostly guys, cos most of GAYSOC at that point, it was men.

RL: So, what was that like, if GAYSOC was kind of male-dominated?

JC: Well, I mean, I didn’t know anything else. So I thought it was okay, because I was meeting gay people, cos where I’d grown up I’d not known anybody and there’d been nobody that I’d ever heard of so it was absolutely fantastic that I was meeting other gay people. I mean, later on I found out that the women were meeting separately, most of the lesbians were meeting separately at another venue, which they felt safer doing and happier doing, and I completely respect that. I did go along a couple of times, but I thought, actually, it doesn’t feel so real. It’s not like the real world as much.

RL: Oh, what do you mean?

JC: Cos the real world’s mixed, it’s not just one sex. And I also thought, if I do anything politically, I want to be in the real world. I wanna make a difference to the world as it is, I don’t want to isolate myself away and not be involved in anything, which is – which was really important to me. So that was good.

We developed the stall a lot over the years as well, and because I got elected to the Lesbian & Gay Committee in the NUS, I didn’t really mean to [laughter]. I don’t know, if you’d remember that. It kinda just got really carried away, cos I was there with the stall, and because we wanted to help people, we were like, ‘look at what we’re doing, you can copy this and maybe do this as well’ to try and share ideas. And then when I got there, I stood up to get elected, actually it was quite funny. And everybody at that point was wearing our badges, so I just turned round to everybody and said, ‘look y’know I’m good at promoting homosexuality, because look down, you’re wearing a badge. Y’know, this came from me, y’know I can do this well, we should do a lot more of this’.

RL: What was it like being so visible then?

JC: I’d never really had a choice, because I’m very androgynous, I always was. I would always, it was never clear what sex I was, which meant I got loads of trouble, like I’d get chased out of toilets – that was an absolute nightmare. I’d think, oh I wanna pee, but if I go in they’re gonna chase me, so I’d have to race from the entrance to the cubicle and if I could get the door shut before they got to me, I could have a pee. So there was stuff like that, so being visible was something I always was. So, it didn’t really make a difference to me. Some of the people who had a choice who were more, a bit straight-looking, they could pass and that was harder for them then, I think, to come out because they were already used to the security and they would be giving up a lot if they did come out. Whereas there were some of us that were real stereotypes I think, the stereotypes – we didn’t have a choice. And I don’t think that’s a bad thing. So, I never knew anything else.

But it also means – like, one of the bestsellers we did – badges we did – was ‘Yes I’m a lesbian so f\*\*\* off’, which I would never wear, because I was never that angry. But the people who had come out, who had been in the closet, so to speak, and come out, they were the ones that were angry, because they knew a difference. They knew what life could be like, and what it was like now, so they were really angry about how they were being treated. But I hadn’t known anything else, so I was never angry. And I only discovered that quite recently, cos I was thinking I didn’t like it, I always thought it was rude. Well, you had it though, didn’t you?

YL: I had them all [laughs]

JC: But we wanted to cater for what people wanted, so people would really come up to the stall and ask us and say what kind of slogan they wanted and how they wanted to express their sexuality. So we got involved with a lot, with the different caucuses within NUS, so we had the badge in Welsh; and the Black caucus as well gave us suggestions, what they wanted to see; and Women’s committees also gave us suggestions what they would like to see or what they wanted represented, which I thought was completely fair, and we tried where we could to produce stuff in-keeping with what we believed as well. So, we did other campaigning within that, because we did want to keep it political and it’s part of a bigger picture of a bigger life.

RL: So, where did you go when you went on tour, after Leeds uni?

JC: The tour started because I promised when I stood up for election that if they elected me, I would kind of go anywhere where people invited me, and I had a stall, and we could have a laugh. And, so there was Huddersfield, Bradford, Cardiff – the ones I can remember – Bangor, Aberystwyth, Glasgow.

YL: Strathclyde, yeah.

JC: London a few times, we went to London a few times. Cos there was nothing like it in London either, which was actually quite surprising. It all came quite soon afterwards, but when we turned up with this travelling board, cos it’s designed so that you can run with it, cos we knew we could open it up and it was there, and we had everything else either in a rucksack that we could just put on, close the board and run within about 30 seconds, in case we needed to.

RL: And did you have to do that?

JC: We never did, because we were really lucky, but we knew we could if we needed to. We were lucky, because everywhere we went we organised security, which basically meant we were either near security people, official security people, or we had enough people who came to stand near us to make sure that there was a good enough crowd to support that, it does, it stops people beating you up if there’s 20 people stood behind you. I think it was, I’m fairly sure it was Aberystwyth where we went where they got the rugby team – one of their guys was out in the rugby team and they were all friends with him, so the whole rugby team came in their uniforms to stand behind us while we did the stall for a couple of days, which is amazing. I mean we were completely – me and Rob did not expect that, cos it was mostly just us two that went travelling on our own. We didn’t expect them to be there and to see that was amazing, but they had promised us that if we’d come, they’d get the rugby team to help. Which, which was amazing.

I mean, some places we went, we didn’t sell very much at all. It wasn’t that, it wasn’t about selling; it was about visibility. So we always had plenty of leaflets to give people, with information on, and we’d take stuff from the local area that they could call if they needed numbers and stuff.

RL: So, when – kind of, what times were you doing this, cos if you were a student at the same time, how were you finding the time to do this?

JC: Well what happened, I was a student until ’89, and then, but I did find some time within that, because we’d planned it, we did a lot of travelling over weekends and where we could take some time off during the week. We went up to ’90 where we were doing it lots, so ‘89/’90 we did the most travelling, and I’d stopped being a student at that point. And Rob wasn’t, either. Then, let’s have a think, so early days it took us a while to get going. The first really big time we did a big stall was in London at Winter Pride in 1988 (no, was that ’88? Yeah, winter ’88), which was amazing. I met Jimmy Somerville there [laughs]. Cos we was up on the top floor of this London college and we had to go up about three flights of stairs, and at that point we had a lot of boxes of badges and postcards and things, so we’d started going, and we had to carry them up the stairs and he held open a door, cos I was like knackered going up and down two or three times, so that was quite good. Rob was really impressed, he absolutely loved meeting Jimmy Somerville.

RL: Did he buy a badge?

JC: I can’t actually remember. That’s terrible isn’t it? But we – so there was this other guy, David White, we were chairs of the, co-chairs of the Lesbian & Gay Society then, so we got elected in ’88 and we ran through to ’89. Why was I mentioning that? Cos it was somebody we met, when we did the – so we did the Awareness Week, not the Awareness Week, we did the Freshers’ Week, so we sat in freshers’ hall trying to get people to join the Society, and at that point we’d opened GAYSOC up to associate membership, so we could have anybody who wanted to support us, but they weren’t allowed to come to all the closed meetings. And, we charged them less money to join, but it was about raising money but mostly about raising awareness. And while we were doing that, Libby Purvis was walking round – and she joined. Which, cos she was like, ‘no I’m not joining, I’m not lesbian or gay’, and I was like, ‘we do associate membership, you can join if you want’. And she did, which was amazing. I’m sure she’s still got her membership card.

RL: So, what other things were you campaigning for in GAYSOC?

JC: At the time there’s a big thing that comes in mind, but Section 28 was a huge thing. And then it was the aftermath of Section 28, which was about trying to be more visible, really. We just wanted to be seen, and to be treated fairly decently. Which was – it was about being seen, visibility.

RL: So, you mentioned a Section 28 march in Leeds earlier, what was that like?

JC: That, I mean that was a lot smaller than the Manchester one, which had been at the end of February. I mean, it was amazing to see that going through Leeds, and we’d been asked, a few of us had been asked to steward for that as well, so we were running ‘round with yellow vest on. Somebody had made a video, this guy down at Yorkshire TV made a short video about that, I don’t know if you’ve ever seen that, it’s um.

YL: Or if it’s still alive.

JC: No, James sent it to me actually.

YL: Oh, it is still alive.

JC: It was still around the march and what happened there, cos all the like, cos he was working at Yorkshire TV as a cameraman, he took all this extra footage and then he put his own short like little music video together at the end of it, which is quite good, and I’m fairly sure that’s hanging around somewhere cos I’ve seen it up on YouTube.

RL: So, did you have a stall at that as well, or were you just marching?

JC: No, we didn’t have a stall, that was quite early days so we didn’t actually have the stall. We’d just done the Awareness Week and we just went round, we just did the march and marched and… we didn’t really take the stall to Pride until ’89, cos we both, me and Rob, went separately to Pride in ’88, in London. It didn’t occur to us that we could take the stall there then, and then when we saw actually people doing it commercially, start doing stuff, but they weren’t doing what we were doing. We thought, actually, we could do this, so we went the next year and it was hugely, hugely popular, it was unbelievable. We’d done quite a lot of stock cos we’d suspected it’d go quite well, but we didn’t expect what happened. Y’know, it was nice to be so popular.

RL: So, what were the most popular slogans then?

JC: Well, the biggest seller by far was, ‘I’m straight, but it might just be a phase’, and ‘Yes I’m a lesbian so f\*\*\* off’ – they sold loads. We did like the male equivalent of that, but that sold a lot less. We did one, ‘Yes I’m gay so f\*\*\* off’, but the – we did stars in the f\*\*\* thing, and that seemed to sell better for the guys [laughter]. More polite, I suppose.

YL: There was that, ‘Love is not a crime’.

JC: Actually yeah, thinking about it, the slogan we really went under was ‘Love is not a crime’.

YL: We had it on t-shirts and –

JC: We did sell a lot of that, and you’re right actually, I forgot about that. That was a huge seller. It was the, cos it was the campaign slogan that we used. And we did t-shirts with that, which sold incredibly well, actually.

RL: So, how many people were involved in the actual design and creation of the products?

JC: Well, lots of people suggested slogans and things, but it was Rob did all of the designs, and we’d discuss them – he’d come back and we’d discuss what he’d done; he is a very good designer. And, the slogans came from all around, people were suggesting.

RL: And how did Intentional Promotions end? What happened?

JC: Ah, that’s the saddest part is we kinda had to grow up and get jobs, and it was once you got a real job there was no time to do it anymore, to tour or to go around. And also what happened was, there was a significant shift between ’88 and ’90, and more people at the Pride, like we went to Pride in ’90 as well and more people had started offering similar things to us, and we looked and thought the need for Intentional Promotions wasn’t there anymore, and we did want to kind of get on with our lives. But ending it, we had quite a bit of money left at the end, and we donated that to a charity – I forget which one actually, one – a gay charity. And then we closed it all down. Although now, 30 years later, with the memories again, Rob created a website a few years ago in memory of what we were doing, so there is an Intentional Promotions website, and I don’t know whether to say this, but we decided to relaunch some slogans and do some new badges for a new modern era. I think we both miss it. We both miss the times so much, and we had so much fun. So, we still actually do work together, mmm.

RL: I know that you used to deliver the Pink Paper, both of you, could you a little bit about that – how did that start?

JC: Well, how that started was because… so I was around, so I had a car so we could go and do all the stalls and travel everywhere, and not a lot of people had cars at that point. And then a friend, James Ward, he – he’d seen the Pink Paper in London and I’d seen it in London and been amazed by this, but he decided to try, to get it delivered to Leeds. So, he wanted to deliver it in Leeds, and when he said he was doing that – this must have been around ’88 time – he said he wanted me, if he was sick or he couldn’t do it, he asked me if I’d cover for him. So I said of course, definitely, I think it’s a great idea. After about six months of him doing it he went away for a holiday, which he was gone a few months, and I took over while he was away. And I think about two years later, when I saw him again, I asked him if he wanted to take it back, and he didn’t, so I just continued doing it. Originally, it wasn’t very many and I could do it on my own, but then I needed help, and Rob helped me first, before Yvette took over. And I couldn’t have done it without Yvette. It ended up being 2,000 papers that we were taking around Leeds and Bradford, and – cos it just kept getting bigger all the time.

YL: Yeah, more people were ordering more stock.  
  
JC: Yeah, they just wanted more and more, and every Friday then for about ten years I delivered it. I loved it. I just absolutely loved walking in to all the gay bars, carrying all these papers, and just looking around, the atmosphere. And, just getting to go everywhere was amazing, and getting to meet all of these people.

YL: We used to have people actually waiting for the papers –

JC: They would, they’d stand outside, waiting for us.

YL: – waiting for the Pink Paper to turn up, and if we were late it would be, ‘’ang on, you’re late’, ‘but we’re only a coupla minutes late’, ‘yeah, but you’re still late, I’ve been waiting for it’. Y’know, it used to be really fun, wasn’t it?

JC: And we’d, and there was a women’s refuge we used to go to – they were always a laugh. Cos they asked me to go, I met somebody and she asked me to go up and deliver them, so I would take them ten papers, but to get in the building was a nightmare because they’d shout ‘who am I’, and they’d shout at me and like, ‘Go away! Go away!’, and yeah I know it’s a refuge, and I’d try and say to them who I was and they’d not – didn’t realise that I was coming then, they were quite, quite, y’know – I don’t know how to say this – not willing to have me come in the building, put it that way. But then after a while we got invited in for cups of tea and stuff, which was quite good.

RL: So, what were the other key places that you’d be delivering to?

JC: In Leeds it was…

YV: New Penny –

JC: The Penny, they always took 200.

YV: Red Lion used to always do –

JC: Red Lion did.

YV: And Queens Court, when it opened

JC: Bananas and Rock Shots? Did we go in there? I’m sure we did.

YV: Yeah… No, no. Well I think we might’ve done, before it closed. Blayds Bar used to, started doing it at the end, and –

JC: But we went to the Sun in Bradford, I remember that.

YV: Yeah, Waterstones, that was important. Waterstones used to take quite a few actually, didn’t it, was it about 100?

JC: Actually, yeah, thinking about it, yeah. They’d take a full pack. Cos I’d have specific places where I’d leave them if they were shut. So we’d either put them in a bin, or put them somewhere where they were gonna stay dry. We did a deal with all different places that we could. At the end it took us from seven til eleven, it took us five hours every Friday to do it, cos we were going ‘round. We went everywhere we possibly could, cos the plan was we both believed in it completely that we wanted to get the information out there for people. There was nothing else, there was no internet, so it was really people’s only point of contact sometimes.

RL: So, no other free newspapers?

YL: No, there were none. Not until later on, I think Shout came a bit at the back end of the Pink Papers, but, yeah, I mean it used to be really good.

JC: But it did mean as well that Leeds was one of the first places to have a really big distribution of the Pink Paper, and that made a really big difference I think.

RL: What did the Pink Paper cover? What were the main things in it?

JC: Well… gay news. I don’t know…

YL: Holidays [laughs]

JC: Well there was lots of, there was things like financial advice and all of the personals, there were personals and stuff, and advertisements for gay businesses –

YL: Solicitors, I think, were –

JC: Solicitors. Yeah, I remember… I can’t remember a lot of the stories, to be honest, I’m not even sure that I read it, which is –

YL: There was news. It was a bit like a newspaper, but dedicated to news –

JC: More a gay perspective, it was a very heavy London perspective on things that were going on, but that didn’t really matter, the fact that it was getting out.

RL: And were there any places who didn’t want to take the Paper?

JC: I was just thinking though, I’m really not sure about Bananas, to be honest.

YL: I think they might be one of the ones that didn’t. I knew – I’m just trying to remember the route now [laughs]

JC: Cos I can’t remember walking down with [inaudible] them.

YV: No, no I can’t.

RL: You were saying earlier, something about the adverts that upset [break in recording]. Yes, so we were just saying, was there anywhere that like, didn’t like the Pink Paper or were offended by any of it?

JC: The first place to complain was, it was Handmade Shoes, which was a women’s collective that was up in Headingley. And they didn’t like, in the Pink Paper, how they were getting more and more explicit adverts aimed at gay men for different pornography services really. And they wanted me to complain. And I was like, ‘I’m not really gonna do that, y’know’, but they wanted me to complain for them, which I thought was very strange. And it was, ‘we don’t want it, y’know, we’re not sure if we want to take it anymore’, which I thought was fine, that’s their choice, but I didn’t know why they had to make my life so hard. And anyway, that split off actually, later, where a lot of the adverts went into the Boyz magazine when that started and we took over delivering that places and – that was really popular, but it changed the nature of the Pink Paper, that all of the specific, male-orientated advertising moved then into Boyz, which was also fine. But the Handmade Shoes still had a problem with the little bits that were still in there, which I thought was sad. And I would’ve liked for them to continue taking it when they did. I can’t remember if they actually stopped me delivering there, I’ve a feeling they did.

YV: Mmm, I think they did.

JC: But I never made any notes or anything.

YL: I remember the lesbians used to complain when Boyz first came out because there was a dedicated magazine for males and not a dedicated magazine for females. Was there a female magazine?

JC: No.

YL: No?

JC: I mean, there was some other magazines later, but nothing we – though I think we did get a magazine one time, but I can’t remember what that was. Anything they sent us, we’d deliver, basically. It was like, if they’d call me and be like, ‘oh we want to send some stuff and do this and would you do it’ and I’m like, ‘yes’.

RL: So, how long were you doing that for?

JC: It was ten years. It was a lot longer than I expected.

RL: So, from when to when?

JC: Oh God. So, I had to of stopped, I went to Dublin, which would have been about ’97, so ‘97/’98, so it would’ve been ’88 to about ’98, well, maybe nine or ten years then.

YL: And then I took over with a friend when you went up to Glasgow, and it was the internet that basically sort of stopped it, because the internet started picking up and things, and people weren’t wanting as many papers, or the paper when we first started delivering, it was quite thick, and then it started getting thinner and thinner and thinner, didn’t it?

JC: Yeah, there was less need for it, as such.

YL: Society was changing, really, wasn’t it?

JC: So I’m really glad I didn’t see that come to an end, actually, I was quite glad I stopped when I did cos that would’ve been quite painful, to see it stopping. Even though it wasn’t needed anymore, it was just, it was such a big thing for me in the first place. Cos when we toured as well with the Intentional Promotions stall, we’d take it with us. So we’d take the Pink Paper to towns that had never seen it before.

RL: And what was that like, then, when people first saw it?

JC: They absolutely loved it, and it was a – we used to, we went to NUS conference, we couldn’t take the stall, because you can’t sell stuff there or do anything, but I’d go and represent the Lesbian & Gay Committee there, but we’d take a couple of hundred Pink Papers with us, and they would be gone within about an hour. Everybody took ‘em. A lot of people had never seen ‘em before, cos they were from all different towns and they was like, ‘wow, this is amazing’. It was really, really powerful, having it. It was – I thought it was amazing. And I was really sad when I found out it’d closed down.

RL: What was it like, in Leeds – you said about some women complaining about issues to do with the Pink Paper – was there much of a split between sort of lesbians who were quite political and lesbians who weren’t that political?

JC: Yeah, that – I mean, I think people are political in different ways, and there were a lot of lesbian separatists in Leeds, who wanted to then go and do their own thing. Which is, y’know, completely fine – on the Leeds march there was a whole section, that they were there separately. I knew a lot of women from, from all over and I tried not to talk too much about politics. Because I didn’t, I liked my dad, I liked my brother, I liked a lot of the friends I had, I worked really closely with Rob for, we’ve done that for 30-odd years, and I could never have, y’know, I could never have turned round and said, ‘I hate all men’, or ‘I don’t want anything to do with them’. They were my good friends. So I found that quite hard, so I *definitely* didn’t talk about it, because it would always end up in an argument. But the women’s scene in Leeds was amazing. There were so many lesbians in Leeds, which is probably why I stayed for a long time. But it was good.

RL: So, where would you go out in Leeds?

JC: Well, going out in Leeds, there weren’t many women would go out directly on the gay scene in Leeds, so if I did go there it would be mostly guys. Women, we went to Primrose, and there was another bar that, down at south Leeds, which I forget what that was called actually, where people would go, but it would be pubs that would pop up where people, where women would go and meet, so it wasn’t such a regular thing. And I know when I was talking to some friends, where the Primrose, which is where DCCP comes in, is we wanted to have women’s discos, and there weren’t any, so we decided to organise some. And to raise the money to do that, we started a pool championship, where we got this little trophy – I think you saw it – cos one month I actually won it, which I thought was amazing; I’m sure I’ve got some photos somewhere of that. And it was called Dykes Challenge Cup, and the woman that went to get this (cos she lives in Canada now), she went to get it engraved, so we had it properly engraved on the side of it, and it was difficult to get people to engrave stuff. And she took it to a place in north Leeds and got it engraved and they, I remember her telling me the story, the guy said, ‘oh, what’s this dyke?’ And she said, ‘oh, it’s a place near Wyke’ [laughter], and he was just quite happy then, y’know, to engrave it and do that. But she didn’t feel she could explain and still have the engraving done. I mean, I think he probably would’ve done it, he just genuinely didn’t know what the word was, but that was good.

We ran that for a few months and we, everybody paid a pound to enter and we raised enough money that we could organise then the first disco. There were eight of us got involved in organising those discos, and we did them at the Adelphi – not the Adelphi – the Adelphi is also somewhere that we used to meet. It was the Astoria where we’d do the discos, which I think now is a block of flats up in, round Harehills way. It was –

YL: We done one at the university, as well.

JC: And we did some at the university, yes, you’re right there, we did. So, we, trying to find a venue was quite difficult and – but when we did them at the Astoria they were like, ‘oh we don’t know, we don’t want any trouble’ and after a couple they realised that the women drank absolutely loads of alcohol, and we never had a single fight, and we didn’t break anything, and so they were really happy for us to go back. But we had huge problems with the fire limit, we had far too many people there, well women going in – cos everybody wanted to go, and the rooms just were never big enough to get everybody in. Most of the advertising was by word of mouth. What?

YL: I heard the Astoria took it on afterwards, doing women’s disco, once a month.

JC: Really? Well, it was a great money-maker, and there’s no trouble. It was absolutely ideal. It was quite difficult for everybody to get to, cos it was quite a bit of a way out, but the venues were hard to get cos a lot of people would just say no. They wouldn’t even entertain the idea of doing it. It was amazing, it was a completely different time.

RL: Did you ever have to pretend it was for something else?

JC: No, we would never do that. Because if they found out, then the consequences were just too big. And it was, I think it was just – we dealt with it very, very business-like and professionally, some of the women involved were so sorted and really knew how to deal with stuff.

RL: So, did you ever have any trouble on the door? People coming in that you didn’t want?

JC: On the door? No. The trouble we had is that there was always far too many people wanting to come in, and we couldn’t physically fit them in the room anymore and we were aware of the fire limits and we’re thinking, ‘look, look – you can’t hardly fit in this room anymore, we’ve let in like extra people because everybody was begging, but we have to wait ‘til some people come about before more go in’. We weren’t very strict with fire limits there; I think today you have to be a lot stricter, but, y’know they were amazing times. We did quite a few, we did that over a period of years as well, and I stopped doing that as well, I stopped being involved there when I moved away.

RL: So, what did it feel like, at the Astoria, if it was like a massive group of women dancing?

JC: It was absolutely buzzing, exciting –

YL: It was just amazing. You used to, you used to be little performances –

JC: I weren’t gonna mention that.

YL: [laughs] Yeah, well I have! They used to do little per – I’ve actually got some photographs, but shh! [laughter]

RL: Are you gonna tell me about the performances?

YL: Well it were, fun. I mean, it was a safe place for women to go. And we all knew we were all lesbians, if you know what I mean, or bisexual, whatever, y’know, there was no problem, y’know what I mean? It was a nice, safe, entertaining, drunken night, really [laughs]

JC: It was. Well what happened, I was doing the Intentional Promotions, the Intentional Promotions and the DCCP thing and then – I was working at the Yorkshire Post, and I was walking to and from work, and I lost loads of weight, and I thought, ‘hey, I look really fit, I’ve got a great body, what am I going to do with it?’ So I thought, I’ll go on stage. Because that’s obviously the next step. And we were chatting within it, and *Absolutely Fabulous* was on at the time, so we decided to create a group that was called ‘Absolutely Fabba’, just to, for the fun of it. And so we had, four of us went on stage, pretending to be Abba. And it was such a scream. So, we did the whole build up to it, and Kay, who’s about a foot taller than me, so we kept looking at each other, which kind of like her head was a foot above mine, and we were looking at each other and it was hilarious. So many people laughed. We did Village People as well, later on. I definitely won’t get in those leather trousers ever again, I’m telling you.

RL: So, were there other people performing as well?

JC: Yeah, there was sort of four of us that did the performing, four of us that actually had a go at doing it. There might have been more actually, cos I can remember more performances, but anyway, yeah but it was a scream. So, we planned the whole disco around it, and then people’d want to come and, yeah.

YL: Your little performance was a highlight of the evening.

JC: It was such a scream.

YL: Y’know, the women enjoyed it, it was absolutely hilarious.

JC: Yeah, I think the key thing though was trying to make people laugh –

YL: And feel safe really –

JC: – and to have a good time.

YL: And feel safe in a good area that they knew there probably wouldn’t be no trouble. And we didn’t have any trouble at all…

JC: There was – I was thinking there was, I remember us, oh yeah – oh I don’t know, I was trying, I was thinking then, where we’d actually been, the locations. Mostly it was the Astoria, the one time at the university.

YL: And there was that one that I pointed out, that’s up, that pub that’s not a pub no more, that’s on the corner, forgotten what it’s called.

JC: The Adelphi, or?

YL: Yeah.

JC: I weren’t involved in organising anything there, cos there were other groups organising stuff as well and, which I quite liked to go along to. So they did some stuff there at the Adelphi in the top room.

RL: So, how important was it that it was women only, these nights?

JC: […] Oh that’s really – that’s an interesting question actually. I mean I loved that it was – I mean I guess it was really important, cos I – I wanted to involve, to be involved with something where there were lots of women there, and it did feel really safe. And it was – gay men wanted something completely different, they had a different way of cruising, and the fact that the two things could then be completely separate was really nice. So it was super important that it was women only. Although we didn’t check anybody on the door, if somebody came and said they were a woman we’d let them in – except there was one woman [ha], who I forget – Vicky? Not Vicky, it was um – she was really, really tall, and I remember her dad being a policeman, and she was about six foot two, and she looked like a guy, and how she stood with really broad shoulders, but she had the most enormous boobs – which you couldn’t tell because of her stance. And I knew her, I’d met her in town, and when she got – I think somebody stopped her at the door, and it was like, ‘no you’ve gotta be a guy’, and she was like, ‘no!’ and I’m like, ‘no she’s not, I know her, it’s fine’. But mostly nobody got stopped. Which I think was also good. And there were all kinds of women went as well. Some of them were townies who came, or ex-students, or – it was everybody, anybody who heard about it came.

RL: What sort of age range did you get?

JC: Well, we didn’t do any kind of ID checking on the door so, and there were definitely younger women there, but I don’t, I mean most of the people weren’t out before they were 18 anyway. But at the top end they were, older women were also there, who are now younger than me, but. Really old, no. And it was difficult because it was upstairs, to get so there was very little access or anything. I think it was a good age range, I think it was a really good mix. It felt more like a family party, like a wedding or a disco or something like that, like, it felt like you were coming home. That was the big thing that I always liked about it. It felt safe, familiar, and you could just be yourself and you didn’t have to worry, which was very nice. I miss those as well, god. Why did I ever move away?

RL Do you feel that Leeds kinda changed, well the LGBT scene, kinda changed during the time that you weren’t involved in it?

JC: When I come back now, I hardly recognise it. There’s rainbows on places – it’s so much lighter and brighter. Some places that were amazing, like I think it’s now The Bridge, is just really shoddy. It was state-of-the-art and unbelievable – wow – when The Bridge opened, it was kinda like, this night was amazing because it was somewhere nice and clean to go, as compared to the New Penny, which was dark and dingy, there was no windows, and everything was hidden away. There were no windows cos I think they’d been smashed in the old days, so they’d boarded them all up, which was reasonable. Then Bananas, which was, like in the basement and – to get through, you’d knock on the door and they’d slide the thing back and they’d shout at you, ‘it’s a gay bar!’ And you’re like, okay, I know that sounds like go away, but you’re like, ‘I know, let me in!’ And so it was very unwelcoming as such and restrictive and like you had to go through closed doors and – cos I was in Bananas when the police came in. So, we’d be sat there with our drinks, and I looked very androgynous, I was very young, like 20, about 19/20, and so the police would be like, ‘who’s this?’ And the barman’d be there like, ‘no, no, no it’s a woman, it’s a woman’, and then they’d kind of pay them off a little bit and then they’d go away. And, cos we’d be sat there terrified, like ‘oh please don’t pick us up, please don’t pick us up’. But that ended very quickly, and so I can’t imagine that happening today. I just cannot imagine it happening. And like, when Queens Court opened, that was kinda like blew my mind, it was, ‘oh my God it’s a normal place’.

YL: Well we needed it really, cos –

JC: Yeah, I mean, you say that, it was a changing of the times, really, it was how it was moving on and it’s marvellous that people get somewhere to go that’s got windows, that’s open.

RL: So, did you – did you feel when you were going out there was a possible police threat?

JC: I mean, that was, that was just, you knew that they might, you knew they’d come in. And I, I think I was quite aware of the police anyway, because I was involved in the youth group, the lesbian and gay youth group in Leeds city centre. They didn’t have many women that’d go and do it, so I volunteered to go down if they needed somebody to help, so I’d go down on a Saturday morning to help out if they needed to do anything Saturday afternoon. Did I ever tell you about this, there’s the West Yorkshire Peace Centre or anything?

RL: You did mention it last time – do you want to say a bit more about the youth group?

JC: That was – yeah, cos I wanted to get involved in town cos it was mostly boys and young men who were there, and if a girl or a woman phoned up then I would go down and help out. And often when they were really young, so 16 and lower, Matthew, who’s a complete hero, Matthew Guy, I would go and help him – so we would meet the younger kids together. I didn’t always wanna go every week, so other people would go on other times. We’d take them down to the Peace Centre and we’d sit there and these young lads, often so young and so vulnerable that, they’d sit there and chat and get to be themselves for a brief couple of hours, before they’d have to go back to their parents. […]

RL: So, were you saying before that you’d meet the young people somewhere else and then you would take them to the Peace Centre or other groups, so why were you doing that?

JC: Oh yeah, cos we’d meet them in front of the town, Leeds Town Hall, we’d meet them in front of Leeds Town Hall. So we’d get them to sit on a bench in front of Leeds Town Hall because it was really open space, so we could – so nobody could hide nearby. Cos one of the things that had happened in the days before was that they taught me how to protect myself when I got involved, was that people would phone up Gay Switchboard and set up for a meeting just so that they could beat up the gay people who came to meet whoever had called. And so the setting up thing, we knew that, it was the right wingers were gonna, could do that, and they did do that, so we always had to take precautions to know that we were gonna be okay.

And, I don’t know if I said, one time there was a girl, she was 17, she called and she wanted to meet us, and we arranged it all for the 23rd of April, so I think a lot happened – having the marchers in Leeds and Manchester, especially in Leeds, it caused a lot of advertisement that never – so people suddenly heard about this gay community that they’d not known had existed before and they started calling, so we got a lot of different calls and we had more girls calling and we had one 13-year old lad call, […] we took him bowling cos like we were allowed to do that.

But when this lass turned up – we arranged to meet her on 23rd of April – I did not think about the significance of the date at all, cos it’s St George’s Day, and it was a Saturday in ’88. And so we’d arranged to meet her, so she sat on the bench in front of the Town Hall, and we could see all of these National Front people gathering, they were gathering there at the time. And I was there with Matthew, and when we walked up we could see them gathering and we could see her sat on this bench quite close, and y’know, maybe 50 metres, 70 metres apart, and we were like, ‘sh\*\*, is this a set-up?’ But then it was also, ‘but what if it’s real for her?’ and it’s just we’ve, we didn’t realise there were gonna be a National Front march on St George’s Day, but didn’t like to say that we didn’t realise that, but we didn’t. And so we went through this whole thing where we discussed what to do, and I said to Matthew, at the end, ‘okay, it’s my turn to go’. So he hid on the deal that, if any, if they, if I got beat up he’d just call the ambulance. We didn’t bother calling the police, because they didn’t come. They were really slow coming, but the ambulance came. So it was, you always called the ambulance first. And I remember going up – I was absolutely terrified, I have to say.

And when I got to talk to her – I got there talking to her, and I knew Matthew was watching my back, which is, like was amazing, and I got there talking and I knew immediately that she was – she was real. And I just said to her, ‘get up, we’re leaving now’, and we took them – we always took them for a walk around town, because the one thing we didn’t want to betray was where we met, because that was completely secret. Cos we couldn’t risk the rest of the group, so we had to make sure we weren’t being followed, so we’d do a little tour ‘round town, double-checking that nobody was following us, and while we were doing it, we were talking to the person that we’d just met to make sure that they were real. Cos if we had any doubt, we did not want to risk taking them to the group because if the National Front had found out where we were meeting, it would’ve ended it all. Cos actually finding somebody who was willing to host the like Leeds Lesbian and Gay Youth Group at that time wasn’t easy. We were in the West Yorkshire Peace Centre, we met down in their basement. Which was great, and the people who worked – the women, it was mostly women volunteers who worked in the shop were amazing, they were really helpful. So the, because we couldn’t advertise anywhere, cos they’d just put the windows through, which was – so it was top secret. That was, it was exciting that it was secret, but it was also really scary.

RL: So, you said that thing before, about you’d call the ambulance rather than the police, so you’d call the ambulance before that had happened, you needed to?

JC: Well, we’d call *if* anything happened, if, y’know, if somebody was getting beat up, you’d call the ambulance. So, luckily, nothing happened. We got away – we got away in one piece, and I don’t think they even noticed we were really there, we’d been in and out really quickly.

RL: So, were there instances where people were – it was a set-up?

JC: That had happened before I got involved, which is why the whole safety precautions were there.

RL: So, was it – was it the National Front who were the main threat or were there other groups?

JC: Well, I mean, there was the British National Party, I think, then, so it was the BNP, they were the ones that actually were meeting. And they used to do lots of stickers with razor blades in the edge so you couldn’t pull them off. So the Gay Switchboard stickers we made were big squares – I wasn’t involved in that, but I did help, we put them on top of everything. It was Matthew that had all of those and we’d like put them on top to hide them. But that – so you couldn’t easily tear stuff down, their stuff, because of the, like you’d tear your fingers if you tried doing stuff. It wasn’t particularly pleasant. But you learnt, there were risks involved and you learned the ways to protect yourself, and to survive really, which was what was going on. But I just wanted to be involved in so much to help other people cos I thought I don’t want them to have my life. I don’t want them to be as lonely as I was, and I wanted it to be different. Unless you cha- unless you actively do something, it doesn’t change. It’s good. I never told you about the women’s minibus – you remember the women’s minibus, don’t you?

RL: Tell me about that.

YL: At the university [laughs]

JC: So because of like, after the Yorkshire Ripper a lot less women applied to Leeds University. So, to encourage women to come to Leeds University they offered a women’s minibus service – I don’t know if it’s still running. And when I got to 21 I could drive that, so I volunteered to drive it – it was a paid job, y’know, they did pay you to do it, and I was driving that. And this was after Section 28, and I’d have a bus full of women and I would drive all around, but as soon as the back shut and I set off I would be like, I have now got a captive audience, so they’re going to get – this was all part of how to promote homosexuality was like, ‘right, they’re gonna get a speech’, so they’re gonna get me, I outed myself every single time – ‘yes, I’m Jackie, I’m a lesbian and I’m probably the first one you’ve met. If not, wow, that’s amazing’, and then I’d just say, ‘this is all about the fact that when you grow up, and if you get married and have children and one of your kids turns out to be gay, you’ve already met somebody that’s got a super, great life, and marvellous and confident and your kids can be that too’. I just kinda went along this line. I mean… I never really thought about what I was doing there, it was kinda, I’m gonna do this cos I’m sure this is a great idea.

But what I didn’t expect – word got around of what I was doing, and people would wait for my bus. Women would wait for my bus to get in, cos they ran every half an hour, and they would wait until I – and we would drive every hour, so we had an hour to get back – and they’d wait for my bus, or they’d wait and they’d come for the days I was driving, cos they wanted to sit on the bus and they wanted to talk to me. And some women would get in, they’d sit up front – there was three seats at the front and two like benches at the back, so there’d be 17 women and, I think, 14 in the back and then three could sit in the front. And often women would come and sit in the front and they’d say to me, ‘drop me off last’. And I was like, yeah, yeah, y’know, fine, open for that. And I never knew what was gonna happen.

Cos I always had in my head as well there’s an element of safety, is if you drop somebody off last, are they going to be dangerous or is it going to be something nice, I never really knew, but well, pretty much all of the time, it was somebody who wanted to admit that they were gay and they were scared and it was the first time they’d ever told anybody, and – they just wanted to talk. And I was really glad about that, because when they would tell me stuff, I had no idea what to say, I didn’t know if I could say something, should I say something comforting, should I suggest like a telephone number to call or something like that? I’d no idea, so mostly I just listened, which actually probably turned out to be the best thing to do. But I – I think I then took on a responsibility that I’d never expected. Cos I was just experimenting – I was trying to challenge things. I didn’t expect then for people to turn ‘round with such vulnerable emotions and to share with me. But they did, repeatedly. But there was nobody else to talk to, and that was the key thing. I’d not realised that that would happen, cos I didn’t – they had nowhere else to turn.

RL: So, no real support at the university?

JC: Yeah, yeah

RL: Apart from the GAYSOC.

JC: I mean there was the GAYSOC, but people were too scared to go. And then suddenly they’d got this private space – they’d been in the women’s minibus a few times and they felt safe there. And they heard my speech repeatedly, which didn’t change very much, but – I think I took you around a lot didn’t I?

YL: Yeah, you used to drive me around when I was in the university, and I went in ’89.

JC: But it was all women drivers for the service, because of the nature of it, and then David White, who was co-chair with me at the Gay Society, he wanted to drive, he needed the money for driving as well, and I remember vouching for him, I vouched for him that he was the most notorious homosexual so it would be actually okay for him to drive the women’s minibus service. And he reminded me of that quite recently, actually, that I had actually stood up for him and vouched for him to do that.

RL: So, what years were you doing that?

JC: That would’ve been late ‘88/’89. That’s it anyway, it’s amazing what we all got up to and, yeah…

RL: You know you were saying about the stickers and like going over the National Front stickers, were those stickers specifically for Switchboard?

JC: They were Gay Switchboard, square big Gay Switchboard stickers.

RL: Was that the main way of advertising Switchboard, or were there other ways?

JC: I mean, sometimes you’d see adverts in old newspapers, they were there a few ads, but mostly stickers – it was stickers in phone boxes, that was one of the big ways. There’d be posters around the university buildings, definitely, I can remember those. Stickers that aren’t easy to take down in phone boxes was a big one.

RL: Anything else you’d like to say?

JC: No, I think I’ve talked about a lot actually.

RL: Yvette, do you wanna add anything?

YL: No, I think it’s all got covered, really. It was… interesting [laughs]

JC: We had a good time, we did a lot, we were very, very politically active, in a choice that it was about visibility. It was about letting people know we existed. I like to think we made a difference, and I hope we did. I know at 50th birthday parties this last year people have come up to me and told me I got them in real trouble with their parents – ‘why what did I do?’ And the big one is, because they bought the badge, ‘Yes I’m a lesbian, so f\*\*\* off’, and at the time when they turned up 30 years ago with this badge, the parents read it and they were really annoyed with their children, their daughters, and that apparently is my fault.

RL: Shall we leave it there? Thank you.

[END]