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Green & Blue Project Andy Galloway Interview 14/10/13

I joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary in August 1981, and my first station was Rosslea, in Fermanagh, in south east Fermanagh. Prior to being allocated that station I didn't even know where Rosslea was, I'm a county Antrim man, so I knew very little of the geography of Fermanagh at that time. I arrived out to this place in the south east corner of Fermanagh and found myself in a station that was literally a mile and a half from the border with county Monaghan, and I found myself very quickly listening to Garda on a daily basis, because in those days in our police stations and in our police cars we had a thing called the x-ray radio set. The x-ray radios were aerial to aerial radios and they had very short range. They were ideal for the RUC and the Garda to communicate with each other, the radios were not recorded, so they were quite often used for ordering fish and chips or cigarettes or all sorts of other things. But it allowed us to have conversations with our colleagues directly across the border and primarily they were used for vehicle checks, because the Garda would put their vehicles across to us, and we would put ours across to them, so we could check vehicles on our own systems. And that was my first introduction really with interaction with An Garda Síochána. At that stage I never met them, but most days I heard them talking, and occasionally we would talk to them via radio, or alternatively in every police station we had a direct line to a corresponding Garda station. In Rosslea, our corresponding Garda station was Scotstown. Incidentally it was many, many, many years later before I ever knew where Scotstown was, before I actually crossed the border and found it, and found that it was definitely a village, perhaps even smaller than Rosslea. But every station along the border would have a direct line to their corresponding Garda station, so communications was good, but we rarely met.

The x-ray radios were short range, and the difficulty would have been how far away the person you were talking to was. Ours worked quite well, and they worked quite well because we were really working in a very compact area. Even though we never met, and even though we were on the other side of a land boundary, we were constantly almost driving parallel to each other around the border, and so I think for us, we found the x-ray sets worked incredibly well. Now if we had wanted in Rosslea to talk to Enniskillen on the x-ray set, it wouldn't have worked, and perhaps if the cars in Lisnaskea had been up on high ground we might have been able to reach them, but certainly for the vehicles just across the border, just within a five mile radius it worked really really well. As a consequence we stopped using the official radio net, most of the time the x-ray set was much more informal. It was typical for somebody, the station duty officer, it was typical for him to realise that he



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was running out of something like milk or cigarettes, and to call a car and say, 'could you bring me in two pints?' or something like that, and it wasn't beer, he was talking about milk! That was literally how that happened. So the x-ray set was quite useful in that regard. Now when I say order fish and chips, in Rosslea we never got an order for fish and chips, because it so happened that had there been a fish and chip shop at the time, which there wasn't, it was unlikely that they would have served us. Because the circumstances of 1981, you have to realise that this is immediately following the period of the hunger strikes, and Bobby Sands had been the MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone when he died on hunger strike. Rosslea was an area where he had a significant amount of support. So you have to remember that all of the shops in Rosslea bar one refused to serve the police. So there only was one shop in the village where we could shop, it so happened.

The first time I met a member of the Garda was just about six, seven months after arriving in Rosslea. The next police station along the border from us was Newtownbutler. Newtownbutler was perhaps seven, eight miles away and all of the border stations had a system where we paired up with each other. That meant that if we had to cover for each other we were able to do so. For example on this particular day in question, the night before Newtownbutler had had a function for somebody who was leaving the police station. So they went out the night before and we covered the late turn for them, and we also agreed to take any calls that they had on the following morning, and they would then start later on, perhaps around lunchtime. They would provide their own station duty officer, but we would take their calls, and generally speaking you didn't get any calls. Crime was very very low, and unless somebody had a road traffic accident it was unlikely that you were going to get called out! However on one particular morning we did get a call from Newtownbutler, and the call was that a local farmer reported having dead sheep in his land. It was a case of sheep worrying by what he described as a stray dog, and the call was literally right on the border. It was literally in the land which goes right up to the dotted line at Clones, not on the main road from Newtownbutler to Clones but on the back road, and we were asked would we attend. This was a little bit unusual for us in Rosslea because there was a significant difference between Newtownbutler and Rosslea at that time. In Rosslea we didn't drive anywhere in daylight, it was much much much too dangerous. Just two years before I arrived two police officers had died in a fatal explosion just outside the village, so we didn't drive anywhere in daylight. In Newtownbutler, oddly enough which was only five miles away, they were still patrolling night and day in vehicles, so we did have to get across to Newtownbutler, but we weren't able to drive in marked or in an obvious police vehicle. We had a car that we kept for the purpose, it could have been an Audi, it could have been a Renault, it might even have been a Lada for those who



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might remember those awful cars! I can't remember what it was, but myself and a colleague put on civilian jackets over the top of our uniform, lifted our rifles, got all of our kit together, got into the car, and made our way across to Newtownbutler by the back roads. At no stage once we got out of the village did we really stick to the main roads because our big concern of course was that this might have been an invitation for an attack on us, although the station duty officer in Newtownbutler knew the farmer concerned and he was very confident that it was a genuine call. The other thing the station officer in Newtownbutler did for us was he contacted the Garda in Clones. He lifted the direct line to Clones and said, 'guys we have sheep worrying at such-and-such a place, is there any possibility you could give us a little bit of support?' This was normal practice and we anticipated that on arrival in the vicinity we would find a Garda vehicle as well. Off we drove, we had a map in our hand, and a set of directions from Newtownbutler as to how to get to where we were going because neither of us really knew, and eventually, yes we found ourselves at the scene and found a quite annoyed farmer. I think perhaps it was maybe two or three dead lambs in a field, and quite a sorry situation because the rest of his flock of course was also quite distressed. So we did what we do, we interviewed him, we took a statement, it didn't take all of that long, we looked around, we sympathised with him, and having left, having got all the details that we required, we decided we would go across to the bridge. The bridge over the river was literally the border at this point, and there was a member of the Garda. He was leaning up against the bonnet of his car watching us with quite a bemused smile on his face. So we took a walk across and introduced ourselves, being very careful of course to meet in the centre of the bridge, that we wouldn't contravene international sovereignty in any way! Considering that myself and my colleague were both in uniform and carrying rifles and had hand guns, we thought my goodness if we step across the line, what'll happen? So we met, we shook hands, we had a conversation, as police officers across the world do when they get together. We talked about the job, we talked about all sorts of things as would happen, and we talked about the sheep worrying. We said, 'well it's a stray dog, and we think the dog has come from your side of the border', and the Garda smiled at us, and said, "oh it does". He said "don't worry, I know all about the dog, I know where it's from". We said, "but how do you know where the dog's from?" "Well", he says "I just live up the road". For me this was amazing because here was myself and a colleague, and we couldn't even think about living anywhere close to the border. We had went through all of these security precautions just to come to answer a sheep worrying call, we were armed to the teeth and we were anticipating at any moment that gunshots were going to break out and break the morning silence, and here was a Garda... not armed, not accompanied by anybody, not concerned about anything in the whole world, and he lived literally just, you know almost within spitting distance of the



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border. And that was my first encounter with a member of An Garda Síochána.

We never heard what happened to the dog, as happens. One of two things will have happened with the dog, the dog will have been sorted out properly, the Garda will have went to the owner and the dog will have been put down. Or the Garda will have went to the owner and the dog will have been chained up. Either way it dealt with the sheep worrying, and we were able to close the file, I suppose.

It is unlikely that, I'm guessing I suppose in those days he would have went through his own farm insurance, or something like that.

In the 1980s things changed dramatically, and that little window of opportunity where you were able to drive about, by 1983 - 1984 that was beginning to change. by 1985 I think all of the border stations all became no-drive areas, and police officers went in for so many days at a time. They were flown in and flown out, and that did have an impact, but the communications, certainly the radio communications and telephone communications continued. I know that other colleagues who, I had left the border at that stage, but I know that other colleagues did keep in regular contact with their corresponding numbers...

I suppose the next *interesting* occasion that I had to meet the Garda, whilst still in the RUC, was many years later. I remember in 1995, by that stage I was stationed in Enniskillen, and this was in the period post-ceasefire, there was a fair amount of relaxation and we were starting to experiment and do things that we hadn't done before. I was going in one night for night duty. We started night duty at a quarter to twelve. I was driving into Enniskillen down the Dublin Road, and I came across this big red road sign, sitting at the side of the road, and it said 'Stop. Garda Checkpoint'. And I thought, 'hmm that looks like it's not in the right place', which of course it wasn't. It was on the Lisbellaw side of Enniskillen, it was most definitely nowhere near the jurisdiction it should have been in. It was quite obvious that somebody had lifted it on the southern side of the border for a bit of a prank and brought it with them and set it up nicely on the side of the road. I went on into work, we paraded for duty, we were detailed our car crews, and I was in the second car crew that night, driving it with a probationer. I mentioned to my sergeant what I had found on the road coming in, and I said, "if you're happy enough I'm going to go out and lift it, throw it in the boot and take it out to Blacklion". There was a method in my madness, because I knew that most of the time you were guaranteed to have a Garda standing on the little mini roundabout at Blacklion. And if he wasn't standing there, maybe in his guardroom. And I was fairly convinced that there was



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a good opportunity here for a cup of tea. But it was also a Friday night, and what I hadn't anticipated was, having lifted the road sign, put it into the boot of the car, and drove all the way out to Belcoo, and then slipped across into Blacklion, and we were in an armoured car (it was probably an armoured Ford Sierra) it wasn't marked in any way, but it was for everybody who seen them on a daily basis obviously a police car. But I had sort of hoped, 'yeah, we'll drive across, park at the front of the station, and nobody will notice'. What I hadn't anticipated was there was a crowd of people standing outside the pub opposite, so of course as soon as we got out of the vehicle, and we were in uniform, the roars and the shouts and the jeers started. So we had to very quickly hand over the road sign, very quickly tell him the story of where we got it, and sadly the cup of tea wasn't forthcoming. We had to very quickly disappear back towards Belcoo and get back into Northern Ireland jurisdiction again. Otherwise I think our presence would have brought about an international incident that would have made the news! So we decided discretion is a better part of valour, we thanked him and off we went.

In 1998 we had the Belfast Agreement, the Good Friday Agreement, which brought about the Patton Report into policing, which I think was something like a hundred and eighty seven recommendations, or something like that, or a hundred and ninety one. There was a lot of them anyway! One of those particular recommendations was that there should be exchange visits between PSNI and An Garda Síochána... and of course, it was one of those recommendations that nobody noticed. In 2006 an email was circulated to all officers in PSNI to find out if anybody wished to take part in this particular scheme. There was three areas of interest. One was drugs, I wasn't involved in Drugs Branch, so that wasn't going to happen. One was traffic policing, and I wasn't in Traffic Branch, so that wasn't going to happen. And the third was IT and it just so happened that I was one of those people that everybody came to with their IT problems. So I thought, 'hmm, I could probably do that'. So I applied and yeah, I made a little bit of history, because I became the first candidate on IT, and in January 2007 we made history, three of us, three constables. We were the first constables to do a joint visit to An Garda Síochána from the Police Service of Northern Ireland. In reality we were the first three constables from the north to serve in Dublin since pre-partition, which wasn't I suppose as much of a deal to us at the time until we actually reflected on what we were doing. So as a consequence I had the privilege of living in Dublin for two whole months. Our accommodation was paid for by our home service. We found a very nice hotel in Fleet Street, in Temple Bar and the three of us lived there quite happily for nine whole weeks! I have to say that I spent nine weeks in Phoenix Park, I worked in their IT Branch, which is actually quite big. I found myself in an office with a



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sergeant and two Garda, all of whom were female, and their job was very much around publications. For that nine weeks I found myself proof-reading reports. I actually proof-read the previous year's Garda Commissioner's Report, and we found ourselves working on projects like that. For me it was a godsend, I learned a lot, I got involved in things like procurement, which in the PSNI was done up in Police Headquarters, and people like me would never have got an opportunity to be involved in it. In Garda Headquarters they assumed that I would know about these things, and I didn't! But I learned, and that allowed me to make friends that I have maintained ever since. There's people in the Garda who I have maintained contact with, we email, we're in contact occasionally. Most recently whenever I was unfortunate enough to be caught speeding by An Garda Síochána coming out of Dublin Airport I had occasion to contact one of those friends to find out, "do I need to send my driving licence to Dublin, or not?"

We didn't know the Garda, we could talk to them, we might even be aware of their names. You generally might have been aware of the name of the station sergeant, we would have known who the station sergeant was in Scotstown, we would have known his name, but we would have known *nothing* about him. Our attitude towards them were: 'they're police officers like we are'... I know that there has been some political capital made about whether or not we trusted them or not. Trust never came into it. In fact the reality was we did trust them, because for example in my account, where we had to go and investigate a sheep worrying... we could control the environment on the northern side to the best of our ability, but whatever would happen across the border was out of our control. So we had to trust the Garda to provide us with the cover, and if the Garda had said to us, "guys don't be going to that call", we wouldn't have went to it. So as I say there is some political capital has been made, and there's been some high profile cases that have hit the news in recent years, and there's an ongoing commission... But nonetheless we did have trust for those folks, and we seen them as colleagues. Interestingly, it brings to memory another connection back to Rosslea that I experienced in 2006. In 2006 I was involved in a Peace II project, as a police officer, delivering equality and diversity training to PSNI and An Garda Síochána. I was a trainer on the scheme, on each particular course we had three trainers, one Garda, one PSNI officer and one independent, and I delivered all the training that I was involved in, in hotels across the border. I did have the option of doing them in PSNI stations, but I knew that the class of scones in a hotel were much better than in the police stations! So there I was in Sligo. I very well recall that particular first session, where I was taking the first session and we got everybody to introduce themselves and to tell us where they were from, and what stations they had been in. I came across this gentleman who



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looked considerably older than me, but it transpired that he joined An Garda Síochána in 1981, the same year I joined the RUC. His first station was Clones and mine was in Rosslea, and even though Scotstown was our corresponding Garda station, Clones was literally almost an identical distance, it was as the crow flies perhaps less than five miles away. Now this Garda obviously was in Clones when I was in Rosslea. We would've been able to hear each other talking on our x-ray radio sets. We perhaps may even have talked to each other on the radio. We didn't know each other, we didn't meet for twenty five years, and twenty five years later I thought it was quite profound, quite touching, almost emotional that here was somebody that I worked alongside in 1981. We met and shook hands for the first time twenty five years later. By that time he was a sergeant in the Traffic Corps in Carrick-on-Shannon, and I was retiring, I was due to retire as a constable, so his career path obviously went a little bit better than mine, but it was interesting that twenty five years went by before we actually met.



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