

**Project: 'Queer Lives: Barriers from cradle to elderly care - An Oral History'**

Respondent: Emma Foster

Year of Birth: 1984

Age:

Connection to project: Local Knowledge

Date of Interview: 04/07/2024

Interviewer: Dr Sue Morrison

Recording Agreement: Yes/ No

Information & Consent: Yes/ No

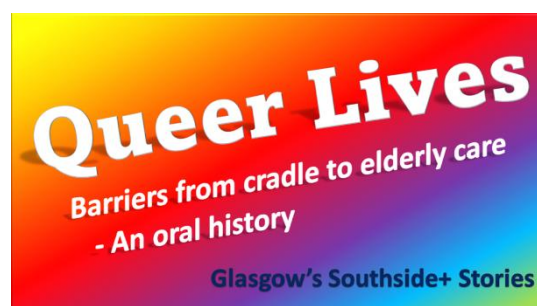
Photographic Images: Yes/ No (Number of: )

Length of Interview: 48.32

Location of Interview: Portmahomack

Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n (internal mics)

**Glasgow's Southside+ Stories**



Time (from: mins/secs)	Description	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.35	<b><i>Where were you born?</i></b>	
	"Forfar"	00.38
00.39	<b><i>Where did you grow up?</i></b>	
	"Brechtin"	00.41
00.43	<b><i>Where do you live now?</i></b>	
	"Portmahomack"	00.45
00.46	<b><i>How long have you been in Portmahomack?</i></b>	
	"About fourteen years."	00.47
00.53-01.04	<b><i>We've used the term Queer in this project because that's the term the people who came to us originally wanted to use, but would you prefer to use another term?</i></b>	
	"I don't mind, no I don't mind."	01.05
01.07	<b><i>Do you have any preferred pronouns?</i></b>	
	"She"	01.10
01.12	<b><i>Would you mind telling me if you've come out to family and friends as queer?</i></b>	
	"Yes, I have, yeah."	01.19
01.22	<b><i>When was this</i></b>	
	"Probably in 2012."	01.23
01.28	<b><i>Going back to your school days did you suspect that you might not be heterosexual at that point?</i></b>	
	"Kind of, I think I was very much in denial. I certainly was attracted to females but I just thought men were lucky that they got to be with them. I didn't think it was anything unusual' I just thought people didn't really admit that. I suppose I should've suspected it in hindsight. But yeah, I don't think I was admitting it to myself."	01.38-02.06
02.10	<b><i>So, did you have relationships with boys?</i></b>	
	"Yeah, all through my life until I met Jane. Jane was my first female partner."	02.10-02.21

02.28	<b><i>At what age did you first suspect or thought, I actually am gay?</i></b>	
	"For sure, I was I think 27, or thereabouts. Jane was really the sort of realisation that I definitely was gay."	02.32-02.56
03.00-03.13	<b><i>Because you don't have the early experiences of being gay, there were no barriers against you in terms of education or work?</i></b>	
	"No"	03.14
03.23	<b><i>What was the community like growing up?</i></b>	
	"It was a city, but a cathedral city called Brechin and my house was a two minute walk from the high school. And I had a big group of friends and we would generally hang around the park at night just making nuisances of ourselves."	03.27-03.58
03.59	<b><i>What aspirations did you have when you were at school?</i></b>	
	"I always thought I was going to do something with art, so I was kind of blinkered which upset my dad because they're all scientific. I did quite well at science better than I did at art but I just knew that was how I wanted to go."	04.02-04.22
04.23	<b><i>What do your parents do for a living?</i></b>	
	"My dad's a retired G.P. My Mum was a nurse. My older sister is a pharmacist, so a very medical family. My brain doesn't work that way."	04.24-04.39
04.45	<b><i>What did you decide to do after school</i></b>	
	"I left after 5 <sup>th</sup> year and I went to Dundee College and I studied illustration and that was just to get access to go to art school. So I did illustration and got into art school in Aberdeen."	04.46-05.08
05.09	<b><i>Did you do any jobs at that point?</i></b>	
	"Yeah, I've had a lot of jobs. When I was growing up in Brechin I used to be a waitress for weddings. I was 14. I then worked in a coffee shop and then worked at the medical records part of Stracathro [hospital] in the summer time when I was a student. Then I was selling kitchens, bedrooms and bathrooms again when I was a student and I became a manager for one of the branches and employed my best friend, that was a really fun summer. My favourite one of all the jobs was working in a fancy dress shop in Aberdeen, that was great fun. After that I got an apprenticeship as a French polisher, so now I consider myself as a furniture restorer. I've got a workshop at the side of the house. A lot of it is on-site as well. I've been self-employed for 14 years now after serving a 3 year apprenticeship. The reason I went into the apprenticeship was because I always wanted to live in Portmahomack and I went into that with the idea of becoming self-employed and be able to live up here because this is where a lot of my family were brought up. It's where my mum and dad met and we would spend summers here."	05.12-07.20
07.25	<b><i>Do you recall the first time you met Jane?</i></b>	
	"Yeah, it was in art school. She joined in 4 <sup>th</sup> year. She was very friendly and everyone just warmed to her pretty quickly. We were good friends. Jane had a long-term boyfriend and I also did. She lived in Inverness and commuted to Aberdeen, so she did a lot of sofa-surfing but also a lot of driving as well. I lived in Aberdeen with my partner. "-	07.33-08.35
08.36	<b><i>Do you recall when you decided that Jane was potentially the right one for you?</i></b>	
	"When I moved up from Aberdeen to Edderton not far from here. I was engaged by this point with my ex-partner and he worked off-shore. I was quite isolated as well and I knew Jane was just in Inverness, so we	08.44-09.33

	sort of reconnected. We were always in touch but we would go and visit each other quite often, but again that was friendship and I guess it changed. It changed one night. I didn't pre-empt it at all, it just sort of changed suddenly our relationship and that was that moment that I realised."	
09.34	<b><i>Did you move straight into a relationship together?</i></b>	
	"No. It took a long time, a couple of years, maybe more. I was very confused at that point because this was me just deciding what was happening and Jane was very relaxed or so I thought. And sort of said let's just go with it. And then I think a friend got in touch and said that all this back and forth from me yes/no was actually having quite an effect on Jane. So it gave me the realisation that you know I can't do that to someone, so I said, look, let's just cut off ties completely and I think that was about a year, not un-amicably, but from my point of view was for her sake and to get my head together. We cut off all ties altogether and I got my head in gear and made sure that was what I wanted by the time I got back in touch."	09.39-10.50
10.51	<b><i>Did Jane wait for you?</i></b>	
	"Amazingly, yeah. This is really soppy and ridiculous but the Adele song was out at this point, Someone Like You, and I just kept thinking she's going to find someone else, it's going to have been too late and I'm going to regret this for my whole life. But also I knew that I needed to just have everything together. When I did get back in touch and said-look as a friend, can we sort of get back in touch. And I think I apologised for how things were. She completely understood and this is quite funny because we met up because I'm really bad between trains and buses, I thought I told her I was meeting her at the bus station and the reason I was meeting her at the bus station was because I was getting on a bus and I'd told her I was meeting her at the train station, so she thought I was messing her about again, so she almost didn't wait. I think she gave me a phone or I phoned her and we worked out what had happened. At this point my bus was almost due so we had about ten minutes together. I said a friendship is all I'm needing right now so if you'll give me that I'll be really appreciative and then if anything else was to come I would be very happy with that. But I totally respect that we need to take our time, build up trust and things like that, then I got on the bus, went away for the weekend, had some time to think about it and then we kind of did move things forward shortly after that."	10.55-12.58
13.00	<b><i>It sounds like quite a tumultuous time for you</i></b>	
	"It definitely was. It was hard. It was a confusing time in my life. I had a fiancé at the time when it was all happening and I was so confused. I was torn between the two and Jane knew exactly where she stood. Obviously my ex-partner was very angry and he sort of said what do you want I don't understand what you want these days, and I answered very honestly because I just said Jane. We were at a hotel at the time, we were trying to sort things out between us and had things thrown about the room including my belongings. I left the hotel with a bin bag of my belongings and had no idea of where I was going to go. So I got on a bus, I wasn't even sure where I was going. I'd phoned my sister and she said come to Edinburgh, so I went to Edinburgh. My brother-in-law met me off the bus and I stayed with her for I think about a week until I got my head together. I'm saying got my head together but ehm in that time I got talked around and went back to my ex-partner and this is where I'm saying I was messing Jane about quite a lot and stayed as long as I could but I really knew then that it was not working. That was the worst three	13.04-16.08

	months because I was in a relationship that I knew I did not want to be in but I didn't know how to get out of it. And obviously hadn't come out to my family or friends by that point. I'd spoke to my sisters and they were talking about a sort of spark in my eyes and maybe it was meant to be but I just didn't know how to get out of this relationship. It was quite a difficult relationship to leave but in the end I did and that's when I gave myself time to get my head together. That was a very hard period in my life in all honestly."	
16.12-16.25	<b><i>When you came out to family you came out to your sisters first and they were supportive, you have brother, did you come out to him?</i></b>	
	"I don't really remember actually coming out to him. he was so easy with it, we were very close when we were younger before he left for uni and I feel like he probably knew and my sister Kellie who I shared a room with and things, she said I can't believe it's taken this long to realise. My sister Tracey was actually quite shocked because we used to go out and about in town together, so she was quite surprised but then in hindsight she said, well yeah it's not that surprising I guess. I've always been a tomboy. I told my auntie who's since passed away and lived across the road. I'd left the home in Edderton and moved to Portmahomack and Mum and Dad had a holiday home so I got to stay there a couple of months so I was on my own in Balnabruich and I got a job in the local shop and I got to know everyone in the village through that job. And I got very close to my auntie and she couldn't understand why I'd left my ex-partner and then one night I just explained to her and she was fantastic about it as was my uncle the next morning, because there had been a couple of drinks involved and next morning I was horrified and my uncle had picked up on that and just gave me a huge big hug. I had a really positive experience from everyone. In my head I thought would you be as warm to me if you knew, and this was all going on in my head and eventually when they did know they were still lovely. I've had no bad experience yet. When it came to my parents I found that the most difficult. It was on a night when my Dad decided to open up to us that he is bi-polar and we were like what can we do to help and make things easier and that was a weight off my mum's shoulders as well, but the same night while we're opening up about things Emma's got something to say. I thought wow that's too much tonight, but anyway I did go ahead and say it and my dad was absolutely lovely about it and my mum struggled that evening. She didn't react in a negative way, she wasn't nasty in anything she said but she just needed more time to process it and I understood that. Now she's best friends with Jane. It's great."	16.26-20.28
20.29	<b><i>Do you think it crossed her mind that she wouldn't have grandchildren?</i></b>	
	"Yeah, I think definitely that's one of the things maybe she would've struggled with. At that time my sister didn't have any children and my other sister was not looking like she was going to have any children. My brother did. I think she was sort of thinking none of my daughters are going to have children, which has not been the case."	20.39-21.04
21.20	<b><i>When did you and Jane decide to move in together?</i></b>	
	"Very shortly after we decided to be together because I didn't really have a home at that point. We decided to share a home and that was here in this house that we moved into. So it was quite quick."	21.24-21.56
21.57	<b><i>Could you describe Portmahomack for me please?</i></b>	
	It's a lovely seaside village. It's got a beautiful bay. It's the only east side village that faces west so it gets sunsets. You get the northern lights regularly and the community is the best thing about the village.	22.04-22.30

	Everyone knows everyone. There's a nice music scene as well which is very important to us and it's a nice place to have a dog. So they're my highlights of the place."	
22.31	<b><i>How easy was it to settle in?</i></b>	
	"It was easy. Everyone made it very easy for us. Because it was not long into me coming out and people knew that I'd moved in with Jane who was obviously not my friend. The best example I can come up with is I was really nervous about going to the local pub together and still didn't know how we'd be received and went into the pub probably looking very nervous and a guy from down the street that I kind of knew reasonably well but I wouldn't consider a good friend at the time, just said, right come here girls, put his arms round us and asked us what we were drinking and insisted that it was a bottle of wine he bought us. And that just put us at ease and actually just set the tone then from there on. I'm entirely grateful to him."	22.53-24.13
24.16	<b><i>At some point you decided to get wed. Can you tell me about that?</i></b>	
	"I proposed to Jane here in the garden and she has a thing about pineapples and I'd bought her a pineapple sculpture for a previous birthday and it was called Karen. Then I bought her a pineapple trinket, a tiny wee one with a ring in it and hid it under the pineapple and I had this big plan about how I was going to propose, it was going to be very romantic and then we had an argument about nothing. At the time we smoked, and I said come on let's just go out have a cigarette and see if we can think differently about whatever it was. In the weeks leading up to this I had said- 'Karen's getting fatter.Karen's getting fatter.' So on that night we went out for a cigarette after the argument I said 'Karen doesn't look so fat, what is that at the bottom?' and Jane said 'I don't know I don't see what you're seeing' and I said 'there's definitely something', anyway it was the baby pineapple. So she went up to it, opened it and it was a ring and she was adamant that I had to say something to her but I couldn't. I could not, I just froze up. I couldn't get the words out at all. She says you can't propose to me without speaking you have to say something, and this is ridiculous now but I had to go under the table to say it so she wasn't looking at me. I can't remember what I said but it was under the table. She said yes."	24.24-26.34
26.34	<b><i>So how long did you plan the wedding for?</i></b>	
	"I think about a year, not too long. We were going to put it quite far down the line and then it was my Auntie Wilma that said we shouldn't leave it too long because my granny wasn't going to live forever and I should want to make sure all the people are there and as it happened my granny's still going today and unfortunately Wilma became very ill and died very soon after but we didn't know that at the time, she didn't know that at the time but it was great advice. We got married in the back garden. The house and the garden means a lot to us, it's comfortable, it's lovely and we put all the time and effort into the venue which meant we were going out to the garden making it look nice and there was a celebrant, Penelope. We just realised that we could get legally married on the date we had set, we just thought it was going to be a civil partnership, so that was a huge bonus as well. After the wedding we went down to the village hall which we both have a lot to do with, we put on a lot of events as well, and that meant a lot to us as well. My mum and dad were married just a stone's throw away from the village hall. So it was great, it was a great day. Both our dads danced the soles of their shoes. So yeah, that's how I would describe the wedding. It went on for about 3 days because people had travelled. And	26.36-30.03

	<p>it was on a Friday and they'd travelled quite far and we thought we'd have a party on the Saturday and that was when we could fully relax, enjoy it and speak to people, that was in the back garden and we had a barbeque and we had so much cheese and we'd bought wine for everyone, there was also a bar, the bar was run by the local gala committee so they were going to get the profits, so everyone stopped drinking our wine on the wedding day and bought from the bar to support the local charity. The next morning when we got up was like a zombie apocalypse, someone had knocked down the chiminea and it was smouldering, chairs were everywhere, then people started coming out of rooms and things that we hadn't realised were staying the night As soon as we got off to a hotel, it wasn't far, we pulled the curtains and just slept."</p>	
30.20	<b><i>How long after that did you decide that you wanted a child?</i></b>	
	<p>"I didn't think that children could be part of a same sex relationship, so we'd discussed that and Jane had said at the time that doesn't mean that can't happen but then we'd discussed it before we got married. And not far into the marriage at all went to the fertility clinic in Aberdeen in 2015, so it has been a 9 year journey but we now have a 1 year old. It feels pretty magical to us both now."</p>	30.40-31.29
31.30	<b><i>Jane was originally going to be the birth mum and because of her age it was decided between you that you would be the birth mum. Did you feel supported by the NHS?</i></b>	
	<p>"There was always the offer of counselling and so in that way, yes. I never took up the offer of counselling and actually in hindsight it probably wouldn't have been a bad idea to have done that, but I can't say we were un-supported. It took a long time and there were a few admin errors which were very stressful over something so important which meant we were almost taken off the list because letters hadn't made it to us. And emails hadn't been replied to, you know I'd never received the emails, but not been un-supported, but very stressful at times.</p> <p>I gave birth at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness."</p>	31.50-32.59
33.00	<b><i>What were the nurses like at that time?</i></b>	
	<p>"I'm trying to think of the right words. I think quite often we'd have to explain that Jane is the other mother. Once that realisation came it was fine. I felt that it was accepted. That's my memory of it, and the midwives were amazing and the doctor that delivered Maisie, she's just a god to me. It wasn't an easy delivery, she very nearly wasn't here. So I'm not going to give any disrespect to the medical staff there. They're just amazing."</p>	33.05-34.12
34.18	<b><i>When you arrived home with your child, what was the response of the community</i></b>	
	<p>"Unbelievable. Because that was another thing on our minds actually. We were so focused on having a child and then when I did fall pregnant I thought I hope this isn't the hurdle that's going to be too much for the community. So I came back and I was just in and there was someone at the front door. I was just about to breastfeed the baby. People were just desperate to see the baby and a shower of gifts and support. It was just really nice and everyone was excited about a new baby in the village."</p>	34.19-35.16
35.19	<b><i>What's the population of Portmahomack</i></b>	
	<p>"I think about 800, I'm sure it's thereabout."</p>	35.20
35.34	<b><i>Do you have any concerns about when your child goes to nursery or primary school?</i></b>	

	Yes, I do. Just that children can be mean. There'll be parents that will say things that would never get to our ears but will go to Maisie through their children. So we have concerns but we're just going to do everything we can to bring her up as a confident happy well-adjusted child. We'll give her a few sentences and things to say and hopefully she's happy, she's loved, she's cared for. That's all that we can do but seeing her character I think she is well capable of sticking up for herself. But I don't want her to have to do that too often. I don't think she will in this village either."	35.36-36.40
36.42	<b><i>Which secondary school will your child go to?</i></b>	
	"She will go to Tain. It's a large school I think. I do have the same concerns that I had for primary school, however I think by the time she goes there, I feel everything's changing so quickly. I hope it won't be an issue but equally children are cruel and by the time they get to that age they can be even crueller and what we'll tell her is, if they're picking up on the fact that you have two mums then you must be pretty fantastic because you'll get bullied for this, that and everything."	36.47-37.30
37.31	<b><i>What do you think your response will be if your child came to you and said I'm gay?</i></b>	
	"Obviously I would be completely accepting of it. My response would be -okay I'm glad that you came to us to tell us that and we can support you if there's anything you need or want to ask or can help you with. That would be my response to her. I would maybe inwardly worry that people's opinion about us has shaped her sexuality. However, realistically I would know that would not be the case. Jane and I have discussed that before as well. Jane would be totally cool with it as well."	37.37-38.26
38.27	<b><i>Would you have any concerns for your child being a gay person going forward to 15, 20, 30 years?</i></b>	
	"No I don't think so. I think it's a changing world for the better, people are more accepting. It's becoming more of a norm. So I would say, no."	38.43-39.22
39.23	<b><i>Do you recall any instance where your sexuality was used against you in some way?</i></b>	
	"I really don't think so. When I was growing up and a teenager I used to always have male friends and get on with males better and then something shifted when we became teenagers. And then obviously people are discovering their sexuality and things, and they all kind of changed towards me. And I had no idea what was going on but I feel like they probably knew something was different before I did and I got heavily bullied by who were my group of best friends to the point where I was chased around Brechin by about ten boys. And I had to just run into some random person's house for refuge because I couldn't run any more. I don't think that's fair to put that on my sexuality but it was something to do with that going from child to teenager. It was quite scary."	39.24-40.57
41.52	<b><i>Do you keep in touch with any of your friends from back then?</i></b>	
	"Yeah, I do now. Yeah I've recently got back in touch with the female friends I used to know. I had a good friend who was a bit older than me and she had the same experience as me and bullied the same and we kept good friends and are still in touch now. She has actually gone through... I don't think she would consider herself gay, probably bi-sexual and neither of us discussed this at the time we were teenagers, or realised."	41.54-42.38
42.39	<b><i>To your knowledge, did any of your friends go on to have gay relationships?</i></b>	
	"One friend actually, a good friend at the time, did as well. There were a few, none of them were ever out openly then. They are openly out	42.50-43.16

	now.”	
43.27	<b><i>Do you think you’ve actually faced barriers or will face barriers because of your sexuality</i></b>	
	“No, I don’t think so.”	43.30
43.35	<b><i>Do you ever think about getting older and what does that look like to you?</i></b>	
	“Just in a camper van touring about. I think we plan to be ladies in a van and just be artists, free and easy.”	43.40-43.59
44.05	<b><i>Do you ever think about what it would be like if one of you needed residential care?</i></b>	
	“No I’ve never thought that far.”	44.07
44.37	<b><i>Would you think it’s a good idea to have LGBT+ only residential care nursing homes?</i></b>	
	“I can’t say it’s not a good idea but I can’t see why you would need that but that’s probably because of my positive experiences. So personally I wouldn’t say it’s not a good idea. I just can’t understand why it’s necessary but completely appreciate that there’s probably factors that you know, I’m not considering. I think it would be a good idea to have the option, of course, it’s always good to give people options.”	44.31-45.09
45.11	<b><i>Since you came out what’s been your best memory?</i></b>	
	“Just being on holiday as a family, just enjoying meals out.”	45.26
45.44	<b><i>Have there been any particularly challenging periods?</i></b>	
	“Definitely when I was trying to figure it all out that I’d gone through before. Then again when my auntie died because we were very close a and it came not long after we were married and Jane’s Granny had died about the same time, so we were both going through a lot of grief in a very short period of time. so we were struggling with grief and that was hard. And my granddad actually died within a week of my auntie dying as well. Also the wait for Maisie, the IVF process was incredibly mentally hard, but I always think of that, but now it doesn’t feel so bad because where we’re at now, we’ve got a beautiful daughter and things are lovely. So I don’t dwell on the hard times at all.”	45.52-46.58
47.14	<b><i>Could I ask if you knew who the donor was?</i></b>	
	No, it’s anonymous. Our daughter can find out when she’s 18 or possibly 16, I can’t remember, but they can find out if they wish. So I’m saying it’s anonymous, it’s not anonymous, but they are to us. In a selfish way I would like my daughter to find out because you always wonder things and I think the older she gets she’ll wonder if that’s from the donor or not, especially if she becomes musical and things. And then from her point of view, I think we’d like to be secure enough in ourselves that if she wishes to find out, yeah I would totally support that and understand that need to find out where you’ve come from.”	47.15-48.13
48.17	<b><i>That is all my questions is there anything that you’d like to add at all?</i></b>	
	“No, just grateful to have the chance to share my positive journey and sing the praises of Portmahomack because the community is fantastic.”	48.22-48.32
