

## One & Other Project

[Skype to Skype call without using video]

*My name is Verusca Calabria and I'm here today to interview you, Steve Roser using the internet, Skype, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 on behalf of Random House Group as part of the One and Other project. So Steve we are here to do a follow up interview to capture what it was like for you to be on the plinth and to find out what happened to you after the plinth and get some perspective on your performance [loud sirens heard in the background].*

OK.

*Can I ask you to just tell me what it was like when you were up there?*

Well the first thing to say was, I was unbelievably nervous for about a month before the performance on the plinth. I was waking up in the middle of the night. I was sweating, I was terribly worried, I came down to look at the, I took the day off work and I came down to look, I saw the cherry picker and I thought 'I just can't go up on that, I can't do this' because I don't like heights. I thought 'I can't do it, I'm going to have to run away' or something like this, but when I was actually on there, on the cherry picker, when I was on the plinth, it was just great. I loved every moment of it. I felt completely happy there and completely engaged with the whole thing and I really, really enjoyed it, I really loved it and it was such good fun. I couldn't believe it and I forgot I was nervous in the end.

Yes.

So that's how I felt up there.

*Yes and basically you told us that you went up there because you wanted to change the world even if only for a bit.*

[Chuckles] Well it wasn't so much why I did it, I did it because I, when it was first announced, I thought this is great, this is a brilliant idea, and then I thought it was a great idea and then finally when I got selected I thought 'yes it's a great idea but actually what am I going to do?' and then I spent an awful lot of time thinking about it, think, think, think and of course because no one had seen any of it, I was on this first day and so we had no idea, we had no idea, whether there were going to be 2 people there, 2000 people there, I had no idea what people were going to do. I had no idea of people's expectations or anything so I thought an awful lot about it. I thought 'well, what can I do for an hour?' and I, I, it really turned me into myself because I had to think about what, what things I was good at and given this opportunity what you do and lots of people were saying to me things like 'Oh well if you can't think of anything to do, you can just sit there and look out a bit, look out to the world' which I think a lot of people did and I sort of felt that wasn't really quite enough and you know, I felt I was in a position of privilege in a way and so I felt that in that position I ought to do something significant and I thought what can I do that is significant, really you know you are sort of king or president for the hour and just you know in my nature one should try and do something good and there wasn't anything that I felt I could do for an hour which would be completely good in the sense of you know doing good I thought 'let's try and do lots of little things' which at least will keep people occupied and little bits of goodness, scattering little bits of goodness amongst the people of the world sort of thing and that was the way I approached it and what that meant was I could do things that were important to me in a small way but I didn't

## One & Other Project

feel would be entertaining enough for people if I did it for an hour.

OK.

That was it really.

*Well what I thought was very interesting when I was transcribing your interview and I thought about your perspective and then I watched your video, I realised in many ways what you did do on the plinth had a lot more than what had been said in the previous interview, so just to bring you back to then can you describe what you remember about what you actually did when you were on the plinth?*

Well I remember there were lots of different things [pause]. The thing which I think most people and I remember most of all is throwing the chocolate off which was, well if you are going to, you can do good for people etcetera but actually what people really liked was the chocolate and so I'd written to one of the fair trade manufacturers Green and Black; they sent me some 60 bars of chocolate and I said to them 'I'm just going to give them out and I'm going to publicise the idea of fair trade chocolate, you know, being a good thing' and people will have chocolate and that is good. That was one thing that I remember very strongly. The other thing I remember very strongly which was [going] on at the time, it was the time when the BNP were making a lot of electoral gains and one of the things I did I can stand up there and talk about some people would get [?] you know they've heard it all before and one thing for me, a lot of the political things I do are really emotional, they are emotional attachments so I was really pissed off. So I thought I just want to tell these people what I think and booing is really good old fashion way of telling people [chuckles] you disapprove of them so I think the thing I really enjoyed most of all was the response to the booing of the BNP for a minute just very, you know, completely sort of childish in some ways but it obviously touched an emotional nerve because it's got nearly 10.000 hits on Youtube<sup>1</sup> and I think it's actually the thing from the plinth which got most hits, in fact me booing the BNP for one minute.

*I think you made a comment about it on the One and Other website on your profile.*

Possibly yeah. At the time there were 6200 hits. It's gone up since then [chuckles]. Yes, yes, I enjoyed that and then I did, I played a little, people wanting me to play a little bit of music so I played my ukulele and I'm a scientist and people said 'well wouldn't it be good if you did some science' and I started to introduce a little bit of science with the soap bubbles and that was another thing which lots of people did bubbles which was a good thing. Mine didn't work particularly well so I was a bit disappointed in those and I sort of wanted to make contact with my family as well so I was, so I talked to my mum on the phone which is another thing that other people did a lot later on and what else did I do? I did, I read a poem which was just one of my favourite poems and then I read an historical speech, one of Cromwell's historical speeches and again it was a bit of his time because it was the time when the expenses scandal was really breaking in the press and I found this fantastic rant about MPs by Cromwell which I thought was a wonderful piece of doggerel and I just thought it was a perfect situation to read out a rant on what was a political arena in the past, big rallies and things in Trafalgar Square. So I thought I'll do a bit of that so there was a lot of little bits really and I sort of enjoyed doing lots of little bits, I hope

---

<sup>1</sup> Youtube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uu4hLpPRRTk>

## One & Other Project

there was something for everyone there but, the thing I actually I remember most was seeing my family there and seeing my wife with Antony Gormley with his arm around my wife at one point [chuckles] while I was up there, which was quite fun as well, that was good, that was great.

*OK let me just unravel some of the things you said, I listened to the parts of the speeches that you gave on top of the plinth just recently and you do talk about an example of direct action and that's how you present the Cromwell speech in 1653. Can you give me a bit more context of how this idea came about in your mind?*

Let me have a thing, how did it come about? Hmm, do you know I find that, I think I was [pause] I was looking to read out something which was something like a big piece of historical drama in some sense, I can't remember how I chanced upon that speech, I've heard it before, it's quite a well-known piece of speech, I'd come across it in some context, I can't remember where and it just seemed completely appropriate for the moment so that was really good and I don't honestly remember where I got it from or why I chose it but it was, it seemed right at the time.

*OK you mentioned Youtube, I'm wondering whether you used any other social networking sites to promote the time in which you went on the plinth or whether you had any communication with the online audience?*

I didn't feel I promoted it in any way, I didn't. The *Youtube* thing was someone else's video not my own. I didn't put it up there. I didn't put up any photos on the Flickr or any of the websites so I just relied on other people's view of me in a sense I didn't have any agenda or anything to put up there to push or whatever so I didn't use any other, I used social networks, I used *Facebook* quite a lot but the only time I used *Facebook* was just to put up a link to the *Youtube* video just to show people how tremendously popular I am really I suppose in some sort of way.

*Did you have any connection with any of the online audience apart from this huge amount of hits when you booed the BNP?*

[Chuckles] No, not really. I had a few people who I hadn't spoken to for a long time who came up of the woodwork and said 'I saw you on the plinth' and emailed me and things like that but that was about the limits of it. Nothing, there wasn't a great sort of uprising of networking from it but it was old people that I've known from years sort of appeared out of nowhere.

*How about the interaction with the audience in the Square at the time.*

That was interesting I thought a lot about that before and to be honest I had no idea. The big issue was going to be how many people were going to be there because I had the idea that people in the Square would not be able to hear you. I knew it was going to be webcast and things like that, but I had the original [?] I always worked on the assumption that it would be quite difficult to communicate with people downstairs as it were, which is why I managed to borrow this portable PA because I wanted to say things, I wanted to talk to people and sing to people and things like this so I needed some way of communicating. Someone lent me this portable PA so the first thing was, it was one of the panics in a sense of 'are they going to be 10,000 people there, you know, is this going to be so huge that there'll be huge crowds there?' I'm used to lecturing in front of 200 people most of those people are my students. I'm used to working with them but a big, big, crowd was something I didn't really know

## One & Other Project

whether it was going to happen so when it came to it and there were 200 or 300 people there, that was a really nice number for me and I was able to chat backward and forward to them quite a lot to ask people where they came from and that sort of thing at one stage I seem to remember but and to kind of individually make eye contact and to talk to people about things it felt quite intimate in a way, it didn't feel like I had an audience, it felt like much more like I was talking to people rather than at them so it was a nice situation, I felt in that sense.

*And what happened when you came off the plinth immediately after, how were you feeling do you remember?*

I was feeling terribly, terribly excited and you know very, very charged up I came off the plinth, I had about 20 friends come to see me from various places and I was whisked off by a French film crew as well which was quite funny because they wanted to interview me about what I had done and I made the foolish mistake of answering one of them in French so they started doing the interview in French which I could sort of talk but under those conditions of being really charged up I would have lost it completely and switched to English would have been slightly embarrassing and that happened and then my family and I went back to Bristol in the evening and Yeah it was [sirens can be heard in the background] the whole thing dissipated quite quickly. It was, you know, it was gone in a couple of days not in terms of losing pleasure, it just wasn't an issue. After that I watched a few more people and actually I watched quite a few people but my own personal experience, it was sort of finished pretty much after several days apart from watching other people doing things.

*How about this French film crew, were you able to see any of the media work that was done on you?*

No, I didn't see any of that. I did see, I did watch the Sky highlights the following Friday, I think it was and I was pretty disappointed in that show but not because I wasn't on it enough but because it was, I just thought it was pretty poor, poorly produced programme that one I did see.

*So how about yourself watching what was going on, you came on fairly soon in the project didn't you.*

Yeah, very early, day 1.

*Yeah, did your perspective change of what the plinth signified in the project after watching the project unfold?*

[Pause] well, did my perspective change? Hmm, let's have a think, I don't know, I was quite sorry for people actually. You hadn't been on in a sense of a day [?], I mean I had what I felt was the prime, just about the prime time I could have had. People were very interested in it, it was a time which was, you know, in the evening, it was a beautiful day and there were people who were, you know, coming on at 5 in the morning on day 67 or something and I felt quite, in a way, this is a shame and I had a friend who turned down being on the plinth around day 60 at 6 in the morning because they didn't feel like it was almost worth doing it and I sort of, I said 'you've got to do it, it would be brilliant'. But I do understand it felt to me there was a tailing off of interest in the thing which then started to come back up again near the end, I think, so I mean, I think also perhaps not being in London might have, the media didn't talk much about after the first couple of days at least and near the end so for

## One & Other Project

me I had a brilliant time I'd love it, but I sort of, and I did watch a lot of people, but I didn't, and there were some great ones coming on, but I didn't, my perspective sort of, it's hard to say, I don't think I lost interest, I think I probably saw it as almost, perhaps I did lose interest a bit after a while. I don't know it's complicated, I felt quite sorry for the people in the middle of the night in the middle of the thing.

*OK I just wonder whether you feel the experience has changed you in any way?*

It did change me, it was quite profound, in a way, because it really made me look at what I do. It was decided that I was going to present myself in front of people who knew me not at all and you know it's very, I had to dig deep into my resources for about a month beforehand to try and work out what it was that I wanted to do and I think my wife was, you know, it's quite shocking in a way to watch me because I'm a very, very easy going person who can meet people and talk very easily to anyone and loves crowds, loves showing off and that sort of thing and you know I play concerts and stuff like that but this really, really turned me on myself in a quite interesting way so I think it did make me think about, you know, why I would want to be up there in front of people and why I'm such a show off and why, you know, why people like me and why people don't like me and things like that, so it really made me think about myself quite deeply actually, about myself I think rather than the process, it was very, very interesting build up to it as I say.

*So what would you say you have learnt about yourself from the experience?*

Yeah, that is the question. I'm not sure, but I think what I learnt is I know what a lot of people would make of me but people were really pleased for me and really liked me up there and that was really nice. It was a real affirmation of about other people liking me, but in terms of myself I think it meant that I was slightly perhaps more fearful than I thought I was because I really don't normally care about standing up in front of various people and this was, this sort of address, it's very hard to actually know what it was but it was this idea that, actually, I haven't got very much [which is] profound to give to the world, you know, I'm just a normal bloke really. That's exactly what I am, I'm nothing special and when you are forced to be something, what I felt was, I had to, well, what wasn't easy for me was to do nothing on that plinth and that was quite interesting, I couldn't set up there in deck chair and just read a book because it was almost like I have to present something that is useful, interesting, funny, whatever to people and that sort of told me that there is a little bit of insecurity in me that shows I am not quite at home in my own skin at the moment so it was, I think that's probably what I learnt in that process about myself.

*And how about your own friends and family, did it have an impact on them?*

Hmm, let's have a think. Other people put up for it as a result of me, two more people I know were on the plinth and they both enjoyed it. Friends of mine went on it but in terms of my immediate family I just think they were really happy for me because in the end it was something I really, really enjoyed and it was something I got a lot of and it was, I do like being associated with things which are public, things whether hanging around with famous people or whatever, so I think I really felt I was doing something which was quite public and I was part of it rather than just hanging around it. I was actually doing it and that sort [of] was nice for me and I think my family enjoyed me being like that. They were very, very, supportive, very generous and very kind, my daughter and my wife particularly.

## One & Other Project

*You also mentioned the personal importance of making a difference at the very beginning of this interview and you talked about when you were on the plinth, you were getting stressed about communication, the importance of communication and the redistribution of wealth, politics, the art of things and so on, so I just wondered whether you want to tell me more about that, where do you think this sense of you has come from in your life?*

Sorry can you repeat the last bit, I just lost the last bit, Verusca.

*Could you not hear me?*

I couldn't hear you.

*I'm sorry, there must be a bad internet connection, OK, just wondering where you think you developed your sense of political consciousness that you talk about on the plinth?*

OK well it certainly, I mean, I think I was at university in the late 70s and early 80s which was a time of great political turmoil and activism and people thinking things could change and I did a lot of that when I was a student, anarchic animal stuff then and I have always been involved in politics in a sort of activists way so I've been helping run this twinning organisation in Bristol which is twinned with a town in Nicaragua for example and that's been running now for 20 years it's been something a friend and I founded and that's very much about using if you like communication and techniques to try to make a difference to peoples' lives so my activism comes from being bathed in the politics of the 80s and when, I think, obviously from my parents who weren't particularly political but were just very, they were people who felt you should treat people in a certain way, you know, fairly decently and out of that grew a sort of political awareness of the time and I think if you surround yourself with a certain type of person, then inevitably, you know, you get into the milieu and it grows out of that as much as anything else. I don't feel I'm on any mission at all, it just seems to be that one should try and do good and make peoples' lives better in general in whatever you do really and I think that's what everyone should do. I mean politics is one root to it and you know just being nice to people is another way, that's more or less where I'm coming from.

*Thank you, I just wondered whether you like to talk about the comments you made about the BNP on the plinth since we are talking about politics.*

Well, there were a lot of issues around the BNP. We had something here at the university when someone was trying to invite someone from the BNP to speak at the university I work at in Bath and there was a lot, it caused an enormous amount of discussion people talking about freedom of expression and things like that. I think there was a lot of discussion about people being free to say what they want and I sort of, there's a bit of me thinks 'I don't believe in freedom of expression' which is not a fashionable view because we don't allow everyone who wants to say something to say it and I think the thing that drives any sort of behaviour in the end whether it's in work or politics, it's emotions in the end. You can think something through but it is your emotions which is the drive for it all and I think, I feel very emotionally about the BNP they are just horrid and I know all the political background and everything but it just strikes me that they behave in a way which is not very proper and the idea of arguing, the expression I hate most is, you know I disagree with what you've got to say but you know but I defend to my death your right to say it because I don't believe

## One & Other Project

that at all. I think that's nonsense and it's one of the things that always comes up about the BNP and they have a right to say these things, these odious things about people that they say. I don't believe that, I don't think they have a right to say that and you can stop it, you can try and stop it by political means but that often goes wrong or you can start to stop it by violent means, but that's obviously not going to in the long run, going to work and so I think you have to engender an emotional response which is not a good thing and it should not be allowed. There's no debate or discussion about it, it's just wrong [chuckles]. I think that's where I'm coming from on things like this, although I'm a sort of super rational scientist I think sometimes I just look at something and say that's just wrong. I don't know why it is and that was very much the thing about the BNP, I hate this idea that these people are out there spreading these odious views and it's not just a sort of abstract thing people get beaten up, people get hurt because of this and it's just not right, I'm quite emotional about it and I'm quite happy to be emotional about it, I think as a scientist emotionality is quite underrated which is something which I think helps me do better science and the BNP is an example of that in some ways.

*Thank you Steve, now I guess the next thing which I really wanted to know which was not discussed in the previous interview is about you becoming a chemist.*

Yes.

*Why is that, how did you do it?*

Well, it's one of these funny things, I'm one of those very lucky persons in a way because I probably decided I wanted to be a chemist when I was about 10 and it's, you can think of it single mindedness and focus but it was just, it just seemed to be the thing I really enjoyed. I had lots of chemistry sets and made bangs and explosions in my garage at home when I was a teenager and it was a sort of something that I really, really enjoyed and I came from you know a lower middle class background I guess. My father worked in a bank and none of my family had been to university or anything like that but I worked reasonably hard at my school and I actually managed to go to Oxford to do chemistry and that in itself was quite peculiar because I was with a group of about 4 or 5 other people at school they were working towards going to good universities and I, I didn't really know anything about university because no one I knew had been to university and so I went to see my old chemistry teacher who was a Scottish fellow and I said 'I really want to do chemistry at university and I don't have any idea where to go to, where I should go to university to, to apply or anything like this' and he said 'Oh you must go to Merton college in Oxford because, hmm, marvellous place, I've just been to a conference there and wonderful fire escapes' and that's where I went, Merton college in Oxford and it has indeed got beautiful fire escapes; it's very old building it was founded in 1264 or something and the building is so old they had to escape out of the window in case of fire, they had to put a rope around themselves and lower yourself gently to the ground so my choice of college [rattling noise in the background] is entirely based on that, talking to this guy. I had a wonderful time there. I met my tutor there who then turned into my PhD supervisor so again another piece of luck who has been my sort of mentor throughout, my scientific mentor throughout my life, he just retired and now we worked together for 25, 30 years and so I sort of grown through that now, that's how, well very quickly, how it all happened, really.

*And what's the name of this supervisor that you had?*

## One & Other Project

The supervisor was a guy called Bob Thomas.

*OK, I see, alright, can I ask you not to move anything on the table when you are speaking because just now there was some strange noise that was interfering with the sound.*

Sure.

*Thank you, I guess what would be really interesting to ask you, to bring you back to this Cromwell speech and learn a bit more about it, I quite liked when you mentioned about the expenses scandal, the MPs.*

Yes.

*So how does that make you feel about happened, since you are from Britain?*

The expenses scandal, it's again an outrage, one of the things that I've learnt through my life that and it's partly going through to Oxford and mixing with you know really successful people. So much of what goes on in British society is hidden away from a lot of people so, you know, I ended up in a place I sort of consider why I ended up in the place I am today, a lot of luck was involved and of course I made my own luck in some ways but I didn't know that I could go to Oxford, I didn't know which Oxford college to go to if someone came to me and said 'which Oxford college should I go to' I could say 'well you are interested in history you should go to this college, if you want to be mixing with people interested in rowing you should go to this college' all of this knowledge is hidden to most people and I think that's what so infuriating in a way about the expenses scandal that so much of it was sort of there but hidden and people felt they could get away with it. You know people who work hard and try to put in a decent day's work for a decent salary are getting, it's an insult to them, these people who were taking money for the dog food, it just doesn't, again emotionally, it doesn't seem fair and I don't think they are particularly corrupt in the sense that I don't, I think it's the culture, the whole thing it was running in [?] was a culture which was, you know, the whole thing was wrong. The idea was that you were there making money and you know you do your thing at uni and you get out and get a job where you make a lot of money because of the contacts you made and things like that rather than own your own merit. I don't know, it makes me cross but it doesn't surprise me, it doesn't make me angry in the way a lot of people are really, really angry, because I know these things go on in a way but it doesn't make me happy, it wouldn't, but yeah.

*Thanks.*

Does that make any sense?

*Yes absolutely, OK so my closing question today would be to ask you what's important in your life right now at this point in time?*

Oh, what's important? Well, my family are incredibly important. My daughter is sort of a growing teenager and it's very, very exciting looking at all of the things that she could possibly do and I have sort of drawn in my expectations because she's very clever, talented and pretty. She's all these things that everyone of course think [that] their kids are, but she is. I can see her go on to do great things and one of the things I have to bring in my own expectations is to let her get on with she wants to do. The other thing which is interesting to me is the [fact] I turned 50 3 years ago and it sort of



## One & Other Project

starting me thinking about the whole; what if I stopped working because I've always done chemistry and I have always enjoyed it, but if I suddenly stopped working what would I do? What bits and pieces could I do and the other things I want to do, I feel to me they are really interesting and exciting, like gardening, I think 'Oh my god', when I was younger if I thought I would like [to] spend more time in my garden, I'd just think go away and shoot yourself. But actually all these things like listening to some music and gardening and doing a little bit of sailing, perhaps learning how to sail, playing more guitar. But it all sounds terribly old but I'm growing old and quite enjoying it, not scared and quite interested in this process I'm going through at the moment, I'm obviously, I'm not young anymore and I'm not going to be young again and a lot of the things young people like going out, listening to music, play football and things like that I'm sort of integrating into what will be an increasingly older life. It's quite interesting working on that at the moment I have to say, that's an interesting part of my life. What else is important? My work has always been important to me. I do like it, it's a bit of a struggle at the moment in universities. It's not looking good in the next 3 years and that's getting stressful but I think, I don't know, the [same] things most people are interested in; the family, nice weather, worrying a bit about climate change and politics in general thinking about how you can make the world a better place and make the world happy that sort of stuff.

*I just remember that you chose as one of your words to describe yourself as a 'boffin'?*

A boffin yeah. Well I think for me it's a jokey word for scientist and [sirens in the background] one of the things about being a chemist, for example, is that some of the most clever people I've met have been chemists but also some of the most dull people and we don't seem to be able to have a happy medium of having ordinary scientists in this country. You've got to be Einstein-like or you've got to be some sort of mad scientist who is not of this world and the boffin, if I say I am a scientist that sounds terribly serious, sort of I'm going to be this sort of quiet person who's like and it isn't me at all, boffins is a sort of, a sort of journalist short-hand slightly sort of unusual, unusual type of person, I guess, and it just makes it, it seems you know, it's my own sort of trying to distinguish myself from a serious person who I don't think I am.

*OK that sounds wonderful, what has been it been like today to talk about your time on the plinth?*

I loved talking about myself anywhere, anytime and it's been very interesting to come back and talk about it and think about it as well because as I say it was in many ways the most interesting thing about it was the build up to it and the thinking about it and you know put myself back [?] and giving me a bit more time [?] to it as well and I'm so happy to be one of the 20 or so people [that you] are talking to. It's lovely to talk to you I'm really enjoying it, it's great [to] keep on talking [chuckles].

*I could ask you a little bit more about your time at Oxford. As you mentioned you came from a lower working class family, what was it like going to Oxford?*

It was great, I don't know I had a lovely time and there's so many complicated views that come out about this because I had a wonderful time and essentially it made me the person I am. Lots of doors opened up, lots of mobility in class mobility and stuff like that being able to have access to artistic people and that sort of thing but it also

## One & Other Project

it's one of those things where the privileges that people have, there are really quite extraordinary you know it is such a privilege to be there and in some ways again it's not fair, you know, working in a sort of normal university comparing the sort of funding level and the quality of the facilities they have there. It's really not fair, but it's great if you are there sort of thing and I got there and I met lots of people who are very much like me who were quiet, they come from backgrounds which were not particularly different from mine and of course there are the sort of David Camerons and the people that are extraordinarily different from me but really what, the first thing it really opened up to me there are a whole great swathe of people that I've never come across in particular who were quite wealthy and from a totally different background from me who I had never, never met this sort of people before and it was great they were people who were perfectly normal people but just happened to be baronets or something like that and I think it gave me a great ease with people. I feel very easy, I don't care who I talk to, I talk to anyone I'm not terribly impressed or otherwise by anyone's position or more by people's achievements so it gave me an incredible confidence I think which was very nice, I was there for 9 years because I did my PhD there as well. I think in a sense I grew into it a bit more because all the things you can do there in terms of artistic and political, theatre and music, I didn't access the star [?] bit because I was too busy getting on with things you do when you are away from home with a bit of money and stuff like that but it was very interesting, wonderful, I wouldn't want to go back there, but it is a really interesting place.

*What prompted your move to Bristol, is that where you are from originally?*

No I'm from near Brighton actually a place called Lewes which is near Brighton, lovely little town near Brighton. I moved to Bristol because I was ready to leave Oxford because it was quite a, it was one of those places where it was very cyclical so you'd meet people. They'll be there and they'll leave and I was there for longer because I was doing this PhD and I ended up doing a bit of work afterwards but you see a sort of moving through of people which after a while was not great, at the time it was brilliant because you keep on meeting new people but then they don't stay so I was ready to move on and the place seemed a bit small a bit parochial after a while so I was ready to move on but what appears again a stroke of luck I opened a scientific magazine which I never read normally, opened it in the job pages and there was me, my CV was actually written on my job description of this place in Bristol [?] and I got the job and came down to Bristol and moved there for 25 years now so and very much love it down here.

*And when did you develop an interest in playing music?*

Well in playing music, when I was a kid, my grandfather was very musical, he played the saxophone in a swing band in the 30s and things but never really got the music [?]. But to play, I listened to a lot of music, but didn't play it very much when I was younger, never until in fact my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and my 49<sup>th</sup> birthday my friend and I were discussing what we should do on my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and we said well what would you really like to do that you've never done before, I said what I have never done before is that I've never been a singer in a Country and Western band which I hadn't [?] and about 2 days later a Johnny Cash song book came through my door and we decided we form from [a band from] scratch. He played and I played nothing. We decided we form a Country and Western band for my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party and indeed we did. We practised and we formed this band. We put on a coach for 150 people for

## One & Other Project

my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and since then we've been playing together which has been a sort of wonderful late flowering of a poor quality ukulele music, great, great fun.

*Can you tell me the name of the band?*

We are called PODE [incomp].

*Can you tell me again as I could not hear it.*

It's Poderoser, it's P, O, D, E, R, O, S, E, R, now Poderosa with an a at the end, was the name of Che Guevara's motorbike a powerful [?] so it's a sort of joke on the fact that it's me sort of political activist sort of person and Che Guevara so it's Polaroser, a play on my name as well, so that's the name for our band and we played from probably about 8 or 9 gigs since my birthday 3 years ago and it's great fun.

*That's fantastic, can you hear me OK?*

Yeah, yeah.

*Lovely, well thank you very much Steve I really enjoyed the interview.*

Me too thank you, let me know if there's any more questions I'm very happy to talk to anyone, that's wonderful.

*OK thank you very much.*

**END OF RECORDING**