INT: That should be us, ok. So, em, the way the interview’s gunna go is, I’ve got like a you know a full on interview schedule here that I wanna follow and what have you, but I would rather it sort of went as a conversation than a, than a sort of question and answer session, so em I’ll refer to it a bit, but er if we chop about and change and all that sort of stuff I really don’t, I really don’t mind, so em, so we’re looking at er friendship em, and so a good way to start maybe would be to ask you to tell me about one of your friends, em and sort of tell the story of, of how you came to meet them.

AL: Right, I suppose I’ll start with, talk about my best friend [INT: ok]. Em I used to live in Austria for fifteen years and em my parents separated and my mum took us over to England, so it was quite strange, this new, big school, I mean I was accepted in Austria in basically a ninety-five percent girls’ school, which was heaven for me, I was like ‘Brilliant a girl for every day of the year’, to em being accepted in ((SCHOOL NAME)) which is an all boys’ school [INT: oh right], only sixth form are allowed girls, so it’s like no girls, so it was quite strange, quite a new experience, school uniform …

INT: How long ago was this?

AL: About seven years ago, coming up seven years.

INT: So you were kind of in the middle of high school type thing?

AL: Em I’d got into year ten, finished one set of school in Austria and came into year ten in England which, we never had course work in Austria and stuff like that so it was quite difficult so em, school uniform we didn’t have, so it was all new experiences, and out of a class of thirty, I can’t remember names, I just didn’t know anyone, so em one of my mates, I met him in our history class and I sat next to him and he’s now my best friend you know, we went out to em school discos and stuff like that and he took me under his wing and, yeah nice lad.

INT: Ok. So how, how, how did you actually em meet him? You met him in class I guess?

AL: In class yeah, and we were in the same form as well so.

INT: How, how do you sort of em … how do you sort of pass the time with him, you know when you guys are together?

AL: Em I don’t know, do you mean in school or outside?

INT: Both I guess.

AL: Both, well I suppose we just sat about sometimes, we also sort of played footie as you do and uh em … he em, after our GCSE’s, we em, he had a villa in er Minorca em so there was a group of us planning to go out so we basically, we sat in er, during lunchtime planning what we were going to do, and we just sort of went to the pub, I mean my mum kicked me out at the age of sixteen and told me to go to the pub with the lads, and it’s like ‘Er yeah cheers mum’ [laughs]. Er so you know we went to the pub every Friday and yeah just general stuff, you know just hanging around, meet up with some girls and stuff.

INT: And you still, do you still see him a lot?

AL: Well er he’s gone off to ((UNIVERSITY NAME)) up there, but every time he’s down we try and meet up for lunch, or we just go out for a good old night so, yeah we used to go out to ((TOWN NAME)) nearly what every other Friday as well before that so.

INT: Ok, so are his family over the water as well are they, or where are they based?

AL: Er they, well they are at the moment, they’ve got a house in er America so they are in America [INT: oh right, ok], so, but yeah I went travelling with him as well during my gap year so we spent what three months at least twenty-four seven with him so, normally you can’t do that with people, I can’t, but he’s my best mate.

INT: Why can’t you normally with …?

AL: I can but you know I need, I need other people sometimes, it’s just, it’s gotta be someone that you want to spend twenty-four seven with, you know for three months knowing you will travel with them twenty-four seven.

INT: That’s quite a big ask.

AL: Yeah it is.

INT: And how did it go?

AL: Amazing.

INT: Yeah. Did you ever fight?

AL: No, not at all, not once, not even once.

INT: Right, that’s good.

AL: It’s quite a surprise because he’s such an annoying person sometimes [laughs], during the history lessons he used to poke me continuously in the shoulders like [laughs].

INT: Yeah that’s the sort of friend you want.

AL: Mm he’s a middle child as well, he has middle child syndrome.

INT: Oh yes [laughs]. Erm they, your other friends, is your relationship with them quite similar to your relationship with this guy?

AL: Er well we’ve got sort of, I’ve got erm, there’s a group of the lads including a couple of girls but they’re part of the lads, erm yeah they sort of, I’d say there’s about ten of us that go to the pub together but they’re sort of a bit older than us, some of them, erm so there are those, the four of us, him, me, is there three of us, four of us, well there’s, well we’re sort of close, close knitted when we are together us three, us four and then the rest around me are sort of, I see my friends sort of as a chosen family, you know you can’t choose who your family is but you can choose who you’re friends are, they’re sort of knitted with me as erm family in a way, er I’ve got other sort of friends here and there which I’m really close to and a couple of girls that I’m really close to, and I’m just making new friends at the moment, new friends at the moment so.

INT: Ok, right, so this new friend, how have you met them?

AL: Facebook, well over the internet, we erm, I’m going to America over the summer for three, er just over three months I think and er I’m going to Camp America for the first two months, erm so I’m meeting all sorts of people through there as well, getting to know them over, by MSN, Facebook, over the internet and then I’ve meet this girl who’s, er because I’m going on a trek afterwards from er New York to LA for three weeks which is camping and roughing it and it’s gunna be fun and I found that er they’ve got a blog space on their web page so I put on saying that ‘I’ve created a group in Facebook, you know lets get together, lets get to know each other as we are gunna spend three weeks with each other’, and er this girl she goes to the ((UNIVERSITY NAME)) so we erm got on really well on MSN, wow I’ve never got on so well so fast with someone just over the internet, you know I can trust her, I can tell her anything and I only met her once, I only met her once er for dinner the other day and yeah we get on like a house on fire.

INT: Yeah. So that must have been a bit odd meeting her face to face not having …?

AL: Yeah it was strange but it’s quite fast you know, we got on quite well there was no problems … weird actually.

INT: Ok, cool. Erm the, the first friend you were talking about, do you, do you reckon that’s a friend for life, I mean …?

AL: Yeah he’s gunna be my best man at my wedding if I ever have one so, definitely, [INT: yeah], definitely, best, er best mate for life.

INT: But is he gunna be going back to the states with his, is he gunna move out there with his family?

AL: Er no, his family sort of move about, they’ve never settled anywhere so …

INT: Oh right so they haven’t like emigrated they’re just working there for a while or something like that?

AL: Well they’ve, they’ve got a one year visa out there so, and it depends on the youngest son who’s, he’s just done his eleven plus so he must be what ten, eleven, and he failed that, so they’re hoping he might pass his er twelve plus so they might get back to England. They sort of lived in Spain for ages and moved to England for the schooling and then they liked the idea of erm America because the oldest son was gunna try out and go to college out there [INT: ok], but they didn’t take him into the basketball team so he went back to England and they’d just bought this house, just out of random, they saw it and liked it and just thought ‘Oh lets buy it’, so.

INT: As you do [laughs].

AL: If you’ve got the money why not.

INT: Yeah. So he’s, he doesn’t have plans to go over to the states then, he’s gunna stick in the UK?

AL: No, he’s gunna, well he doesn’t wanna stick in the UK he just wants to, he doesn’t like the UK too much, the weather doesn’t suit him, he lived in Spain for so many years so, yeah.

INT: Yeah, yeah. So how do you think, I mean if he heads off somewhere sunny and you end up staying in the UK or something how, how do you think …?

AL: I’m not planning to stick around in the UK myself.

INT: But I mean you may end up living in different parts of the world or something like that.

AL: Well yeah the world is a small part, place now, erm you know there’s always the internet, there’s phones, I mean he’s in ((Scottish City)) which is as far away as it could be, em Australia [INT: yeah, yeah], I mean whilst I was living in Austria erm my cousins and I, quite close, erm they moved away sort of a car distance each travel so we didn’t see each other as often, but we could have done and when I moved away what they said was we could have seen each other so often, but we didn’t and now that I’m living so far away they want to see me, so the distance doesn’t really matter, it’s just the effort that you put into it I reckon.

INT: Yeah, ok. Erm so this, this chap you met at school did he, er I mean what were your other school friends like?

AL: Some were ok [laughs], erm I haven’t had an easy life with friends, I’ve always been sort of erm bullied, I know when you erm, some of my friends you know took, I got taken advantage of, I’m a nice guy, you know does everything for everyone, doesn’t say no, and people took advantage of me so, I sort of learnt the hard way, erm so there are a few folks like that but I always got on, tried to get on with everyone, erm I can’t dislike, erm I fail to dislike people in a way, there’s only very rare people that I dislike and that’s a very good reason, only if they upset my family or something and that’s it, but otherwise I get on well with people in general.

INT: What, what sort of er things do you mean by you were taken advantage of?

AL: Erm … just helping them in all sorts where, where I can, erm they’d hang around with me when it suited them and then just drop me like I was nothing, erm and the next thing they’d be bullying me, teasing me and I wouldn’t know why I was in place, erm but, no …

INT: And yet, and yet these were people that you sort of brought up in the context of friends as well so it was …

AL: Yeah, quite confusing sometimes [INT: yeah, yeah] … I don’t know it, with them, with my friends that I’ve got now it is, we’ve got sort of a banter going on, you know when we can say anything to each other which if we say to another person could be quite hurtful and quite shocking and people see it as something they don’t, yeah ‘How can you let him talk to you like that’, and I go ‘I give him as good back’, and we know that it’s only joking, I mean there’s this girl in university and honestly she can say anything to me and I’d just laugh it off because I know she’s joking, you know if you say it in one way words may hurt, only if you let them, and if you mean it in a hurtful way, so.

INT: But she doesn’t?

AL: No.

INT: What sort of things, I mean?

AL: Oh, stupid things you know, quite insulting things, telling me how stupid I am, I’m rubbish at this, and this, that and the other, I don’t know it’s just, just petty things sometimes that get to people, it’s just …

INT: It’s only in the context of the friendship, it’s just …?

AL: Oh yeah, just anything really.

INT: It just forms part of the, how you speak to each other.

AL: Exactly.

INT: Yeah, yeah, ok. Erm how many of your other school friends are you still in touch with?

AL: … [Sigh] erm … actually there’s quite a few who go out every so often, just me and three of them majorly, which are my best, er three friends, erm one’s sort of whenever he had a girlfriend he always stuck to his girlfriend, sort of distanced himself from the group, so him I see every so often.

INT: When he’s single [laughs].

AL: Erm no, no, this one I think that’s gunna last for some reason, erm he’s been with her for a few years now, erm when I go …

INT: So you still see him, he’s not sort of isolated?

AL: He’s not isolated no but I still see him every so often, erm over Facebook I like to sort of give people a line every so often, erm I tend to like to keep in touch with people but I’m rubbish at it [laughs], I intend to say ‘I will phone you, we’ll do that’, I mean I phoned up erm a friend that I went to school with and er she said ‘Oh we need to keep in contact more often’, ‘Yeah, yeah’, that was January [laughs], haven’t heard from her since.

INT: So in four months that’s not brilliant.

AL: No [laughs].

INT: Ok, and there must be, I mean there must be other friends that you’ve sort of drifted away from as well?

AL: Yeah erm I mean obviously having lived in Austria for fifteen, fourteen, fifteen years, I had a few friends out there, I mean one of them, she funnily enough went, she was, we’d just finished junior school so we were eleven, she moved to England, a Filipino girl, her family moved to London [INT: ok], and we kept in contact by letter so that sort of, er when I moved to England I met her once, so that was five years later, erm and we met once and she now has moved to the Philippines to do a dentistry course, and I haven’t seen her in ten years and we almost lost contact totally, as in I used to send letters to her family and everything and never got anything back and then weirdly enough I’d find her online somewhere and think ‘Fantastic, she’s there’ and then lose contact again with her and then out of the blue she says ‘Oh hello, I’m now on Facebook as well’, so erm that’s one friend I sort of, on and off contact [INT: yeah]. Erm my best friend from junior school who I used to be in contact with, but I know I can find him on the internet from their news letters because he is a weightlifter for Austria erm but I’ve lost total contact with him, I’ve got his number so I can try and phone his family when I’m over, but erm there’s one best friend he’s not internet, he doesn’t like the idea of internet and stuff like that, he’s a bit backwards [laughs], erm him I phone every time I’m in Austria, I try and meet up at least once.

INT: Do you go back to Austria quite a bit?

AL: Erm I used to, it’s more difficult now since my dad died last year erm, but erm I’m staying at, I go back in two weeks time, I’m staying at my grandparents’ out there, so erm I’m intending to go at least once or twice a year, I used to go twice a year with my dad, to visit my dad, but now I’ll settle for once or twice a year.

INT: Ok, and you tend to, there’ll be friends that you hook up with when you’re there?

AL: Erm yeah I try to, like my one mate, and erm this one girl I can just drop a mail or try and meet up.

INT: And will you see a lot of them when you’re there or just like see them once and that’s it?

AL: Er it’s quite difficult I always, er when I went over to see my dad we had full programme you know every single family member wanted to see you, from the great aunty to the cousins to this, I mean every single day we were doing something else, and I’d just have to say ‘Whoa I want to see one of my friends’ and I’d have to put them in on an evening and for a day it’s, it’s quite mental but I think this time I might have a bit more of a relaxed time, and be able to do what I want.

INT: Yeah. So when you see, when you see them when you haven’t seen them in a while how does, how does that, how does that pan out?

AL: It’s just as if we’d seen each other a few days before [INT: ok], it’s just absolutely normal, just catch up on er stuff because the one guy, I really don’t have any, hardly have any contact with people in Austria, friends, and we just sort of catch up on things and gossip and what’s going on, and I mean I think because of … I was gunna meet up with him last time I was over in Austria, which is a year, a year and a half ago and on the day that we were meant to meet up his parents erm sent him somewhere that he needed to go so he didn’t have time to meet up, erm I was gunna be there, I was with dad so I was only there for a week and it was really, really mad, mayhem, so couldn’t meet up with him then, did try to but erm … again didn’t have time, and then I went over with my then girlfriend and he didn’t have time or something like that, it kind of didn’t work out so I haven’t seen him for nearly two years now so I should definitely try, I need to phone him after my exams and say ‘By the way I’m coming over to Austria, make some time for me’ [INT: yeah]. Yeah, but once I went over and he’d organised a mini class reunion for me [INT: oh, good], as a surprise which was really good, seeing people, someone actually greeted me and I said, he knew my name and I was like ‘Who the hell are you?’, look, I looked at him and he said ‘You don’t recognise me do you’ and I said ‘No’, and he said who he was and I was like ‘Flipping heck’, I mean he, he was a, like this when I saw, when he was standing in front of me, the last time I saw him he was quite a brick, you know he was a good body shape and a pain in the arse, didn’t like him [laughs], and he’d totally changed, he was totally laid back and a nice guy, and it was like ‘Wow’ [INT: yeah, yeah, cool], so yeah.

INT: So the people that you do lose contact with, what, what’s, what are the sort of things that end up meaning that you lose contact with them?

AL: Just literally lack of time and literally erm, I’ve literally only fallen out with one friend before and that was because of, he was being so childish and so stupid, it was on his accord, Man United beat Southampton which meant them being relegated, and then the Monday afterwards, everyday in the common room as every Monday I said ‘How was your weekend’, and he just put his head down and just looked at me and just shook his head and I thought ‘Shit’, refused to talk to me, refused to sit next to me, refused to talk to me, absolutely haven’t spoken to him since, he will not accept any apologies from me, nothing, this is, we’re talking about an eighteen year old male person who, ok I cramped his pride a bit, so puh.

INT: Oh dear. So when you came to university, how did you go about meeting like new friends? Did you have any friends from school that came to university?

AL: Erm no.

INT: So it was like completely new, blank slate sort of thing?

AL: Blank slate, totally. Well on first day, er walked in erm I was standing there in front of the room, I was like ‘Crap’, big, new place, new people, and this guy, cockney guy, erm he started talking to me and I was like ‘huff someone’s talked to me, great’ [laughs], and we were sat in the same room and he got taken out because he was in a different tutor group in the end and I had to stay in the room, and I sat next to this girl erm and who started talking to me and we’d realised that we’d been at a party together once and had a mutual friend, so erm she had a few friends that were with her so the lot of us went to the erm, er what’s it called the fair, the fresher’s fair, well I totally lost them, so I went and er, erm sort of sat next to them and then this Irish girl that erm, the one that takes the mickey out of, me she sat there by us as well, sort of went down to ((Local Pub)) and sort of welded together through booze, always works fantastically, I think the first time we all went there it’s like fifteen of us and just having a few drinks getting to know each other and you know, sort of, sort of, that group we sort of speak every so often, say ‘Hi’ and you know we know each other so that’s kind of cool.

INT: You, it makes it sound like they haven’t ended up being your like close friends here, but you still sort of …

AL: No, I mean I can talk to them whatever I want about, I mean the girl that erm, I can, yeah we’ve got ourselves a close-ish friendship I reckon, erm I mean I’ve baby sat for one of my mates who was the first guy who’s erm girlfriend’s got a kid and they’re very picky about choosing people who baby-sit, erm so I’ve babysat for them a couple of times, so I suppose …

INT: There’s a certain level of trust in play there and yeah.

AL: Certain level yeah, so there’s some good friends there, and definitely since that with my dad, I’ve er, there’s been quite a bit of support there from them as well so.

INT: Yeah I was wanting to ask about that, you were saying, you were saying, you mentioned your dad died last year.

AL: Yeah he died last August, so er it was quite a shock because it wasn’t expected, he took his own life [INT: ok], and so I was like ‘whoa’, it was like two days before my brothers were meant to go and see him as well, and erm I was meant to introduce my girlfriend to him, my then girlfriend, and erm yeah it was kind of a strange experience, I mean I needed my friends quite a bit when I came back erm and talk, just talk to them and you know there’s erm, it’s a very difficult subject to talk about erm well not just personally, I don’t mind talking about it, it’s just some people don’t like to listen to it and talk about it and I’ve been quite lucky with the people that I’ve met here in university, also my best friends, I’ve had quite a bit of support from them.

INT: So they’ve been ok to talk about it?

AL: They’ve been absolutely fantastic yeah, one of my mates actually said to me erm, quite recently, a few months ago, he said ‘Oh I didn’t realise you were ok to talk about it’, I said ‘puh no problem about it’ you know and he went ‘huh fine’ you know and they sort of chatted about my dad to me because he’d met him once so, so that was …

INT: So when your dad died you said that was August so the university hadn’t sort of …

AL: Uni hadn’t started yeah.

INT: Yeah uni hadn’t started then.

AL: Erm no well which meant that I wasn’t clear on when I was coming back to university and everything so erm obviously I needed people to sort stuff out for me [INT: ok], erm like registration, getting booklets and stuff like that cos erm I went back again in September over registration period so I ended up missing a couple of days, erm so obviously you need people to erm take a few notes and stuff like that.

INT: So you were in touch with your university friends during the summer?

AL: Yeah.

INT: You were, ok, so it wasn’t like erm you had to hunt them down or you didn’t sort of not see them for months?

AL: Not at all, no, I just give them a bell, I mean when we got our result through I was sitting with my mates having a few drinks and I got a phone call and it was er, we we’re just ‘Oh yeah what did you get?’ and stuff like that, so yeah it’s not as if oh six months, five months of not, no contact, some of them yeah but some of them no, but erm yeah I mean through the internet as well now and stuff, yeah.

INT: You’ve talked about that quite a lot, the internet and Facebook and MSN and that, you obviously …

AL: I’m an addict [laughs], honestly five minutes before I walked in to this room I thought ‘I’ve got ten minutes, lets log on and see what’s going on’ [laughs]. Whilst I was doing my revision, here’s my laptop with Facebook running, and here’s my book and my notes, it’s, I don’t know it’s a way of life now, it’s just …

INT: And you’re mostly in touch with, the people that you know online are they mostly people that you also know erm face to face?

AL: Most of them yeah erm …

INT: But not all of them?

AL: Well only because I’ve, I’m gunna meet all of them, but they’re the people that are, I’m going to camp with and on the trek with so, most, er yeah I know, yeah I know most of them.

INT: But other than that they’re all people that you know from around, or from school, or from uni or whatever?

AL: Yeah.

INT: Ok, alright, ok. Erm … the friends you met at uni, how long do you think you’re gunna stay mates with them?

AL: I, I just think forever, but erm nothing’s forever, you know erm … there’s a couple of people that I think I’d like to stay in contact with quite a bit, erm but in a way they say before you go to university you’re gunna meet the friends that you’re gunna be friends with for the rest of your life, erm I don’t think it’s as easy as that, erm but I am sure that erm a couple of us are going to stay in contact, you know every so often meet up with each other, I’d like to think that but …

INT: So why those people and not other friends?

AL: Erm because we’re closer, erm some of them are sort of, I don’t know it’s just, I’d like to think everyone would er keep in contact but it never really happens, I mean not sort of a …

INT: No life doesn’t work like that does it, no.

AL: It doesn’t no, yeah you get your own life and then you know a month becomes a year, and that becomes ten years, and then all of a sudden you sort of meet in the street and say ‘Hi’ and ‘Oh we need to meet up sometime’ and then you’re eighty years old and thinking ‘All those people I’ve known …’

INT: Yeah, ok. [Cough]. Sorry I’ve got a bit of a cough. Erm can you think of an example from your own experience that illustrates what friendship means to you personally?

AL: Friendship to me is the second most important thing in my life I reckon, after my family [INT: ok], erm as I said they’re like my chosen family some of the people I’ve become friends with and I couldn’t live without them, erm I’m quite a, I’m quite a loner sometimes, I like to just sit in my room and do absolutely nothing, just sit on my PlayStation, play some FIFA or something like that and some spend a bit of time of my life, but erm, I’d say friends I need them as well you know, go out, have a drink, you know when something shit happens you know just go out and you can actually sit there and get absolutely wasted and just talk to them, and just have some fun as well you know, you can talk to them about things you can’t exactly talk to your family about, erm you can swear a lot more with your friends [laughs], erm you know friends I say are for life as well as erm family, so you know they really are important to me.

INT: Can you think of like one particular example of kindness maybe, like an act of kindness by a friend?

AL: Um … I’m sure there’s many [laughs], if my friends see that I’m sorry, erm act of kindness … er I suppose my best mate inviting me to go to his villa and erm also his family inviting me to stay at their place in America for two and a half months and I wasn’t even allowed to pay anything, erm I had to battle to give them anything and his mum actually did all my ironing and everything so I guess, yeah such little things erm, erm just popping round to, my best mate just said ‘Oh I’m in the area, do you mind if I pop round and stuff’, it’s just little things really, erm oh my, that’s one thing erm I saw this watch in a shop once and I explained what it looked like and it’s this pocket watch, I don’t like wearing watches, I don’t like wearing too much on my arms [INT: ok], and erm it was this pocket watch, erm like a stop watch kind of style and I explained what I saw to my mate and I said ‘Oh it’s really good but I haven’t go the money, it’s eighty quid, I don’t like spending money’, twenty first birthday last September and there it was, he’d bought it me in America [INT: oh wow], I suppose that, that is erm, yeah that’s one of the best things I think a …

INT: So what did that, I mean what did that mean to you?

AL: Everything cause I’d also just lost my dad and I’d just been ‘Wow’ you know that really just shows what a mate is, he, he as I said he’s a pain in the arse [laughs], and very erm, you know, he always says what he thinks and everything, but you know he never shows too much how he cares and that just sort of symbolises our friendship I reckon.

INT: Yeah, yeah I mean it, it strikes me that it means that he had to be paying attention in the first place …

AL: Which he pays a lack of sometimes, I talk to him, you know ask him something and he says ‘Sorry were you talking to me?’ [Laughs], and I’m like cheers mate I’ve just babbled on on a monologue here for the last ten minutes.

INT: And then he had to remember it, and then he had to you know go to the effort of picking it out as well.

AL: Yeah, yeah, I mean as he, I said ‘Wow I can’t believe you got me this and you know remembered’ and he said ‘Well I wasn’t actually looking for anything like that, I just saw it and it was on display and it was the last one so I bought it’, as if ‘puh big deal’ kind of thing, but it meant a lot to me.

INT: Yeah, so you still have that obviously?

AL: Yeah I think it’s on the floor in between my bed and my desk at the moment [laughs].

INT: Yeah you said you weren’t so tidy [laughs]. Ok. You ever been let down by a friend?

AL: Quite a few times, erm sometimes I thought they were friends and they ended up being just people you couldn’t trust, and I was lied to, or er yeah in the end bullied you and you know.

INT: Could you give me an example of like a particular person?

AL: A particular person, erm yeah that guy that erm … ended up being really skinny and quite nice in the end after I’d not seen him for ages, we used to be really good friends in high school first couple of years and then he sort of turned, I mean he, I think he had a mental problem I think because he used to make swords out of erm pieces of metal and everything and he used to have sword fights and not just playful, he would actually whack you and he went absolutely ape and then whenever someone else, but just the two of us were fine and then some, a third party came into it and he just turned on me and just took the mick out of me and made me feel this big, and foolishly I kept crawling back, but in the end I just thought ‘Sod you’.

INT: How long did that go on for?

AL: A few months, not a year, something like that.

INT: So why did you, why did you keep going back do you think?

AL: Because I’m a forgiving idiot that um [laughs], I don’t know, I always just see the best in people constantly yeah, I don’t know, fool, just always had friends and I hated erm seeing bad things in them and thinking that they’re horrible and stuff like that, I suppose I was used to it, always had someone pick on me so.

INT: Has that been something sort of fairly, I don’t know, constant for you?

AL: Yeah from kindergarten age up there was always the group in the er, in the erm play area where I used to live in Austria that individually some people were great, get the group together and I was the hunted … so … this one kid he was always jealous of me because I used to be quite friendly and you know greet his mum and everything, and she used to turn round and ‘Oh why can’t you be like that’, yeah not the greatest thing to say to your son I reckon.

INT: Not clever tactically [laughs].

AL: No.

INT: So this, this erm, this friend you’re talking about who, who erm kind of beat you with swords [laughs], does sound fairly hectic, what, I mean what sort of impact does that have on you?

AL: I reckon it’s character building, it sort of gives you life experience and you know my brother’s now going through a similar experience at this very moment, he had this best friend and all of a sudden there was a third person who’s absolutely er, I don’t know, he’s a year seven and he thinks he is the world, and, whereas my brother was friends, just friends with him he changed, he was rude, he lied, he was totally character changing and so he got away and he became quite nice and spent a lot of time with this other guy, and who’s now, the three of them then, sort of the two of them got friends again with that guy and it escalated, turned on my brother and I just saw my life rolling through past me again through my brother, I was like, it’s sort of, I can now, I’ve gained the experience, I can take him aside and say ‘This is right, this is wrong’, you know can help him, erm again I can then myself now see who is actually my friend, erm I suppose I’ll never learn properly, never do, erm cause I always see the best in people, but you know the trust thing I think is a bit of a high standard, I don’t trust people as soon as I meet them, I need to, I need to gain their trust.

INT: Whereas you used to, you used to just trust them.

AL: Yeah.

INT: So do, if you think about those experiences now and you think about the friends that you’ve currently got, are there sort of people that you think might sort of be like that if given the chance?

AL: I hope not, no, no definitely not, my best mate, no, the group that we’ve got now, no, definitely not.

INT: So how’s the group that you’ve got now different from the groups of friends you’ve had in the past? Cause you talk about them in quite a different way.

AL: Yeah, I mean I left Austria when I was fourteen so the groups of childhood friends, so there’s different friends, whereas you know I needed, I was desperate for, I needed a group of friends in England, so it got a lot tighter, we spent near enough every, we spent every day together and everything, and the weekends we spent together, we went to the cinemas, we went to the, as we got old enough, well theoretically, in my mind I was old enough because I was brought up living in Austria [INT: no matter what the law says, laughs] and you can drink from the age of sixteen in Austria [INT: ok], no matter what, where the border changes, I was allowed, mummy said so I can, erm so that was fine, so I needed a sort of tighter group, and that, we just knitted up tightly.

INT: But some of the people, some of the friends from school were, were people who then let you down afterwards?

AL: In er, in Austria yeah.

INT: Oh so that was a sort of …

AL: That, that was a, they were in Austria, the English, I’ve not really had too much problems in England with friends [INT: ok], not too much, [INT: right] you know I still see old school friends walking about, but I’m not really in contact with any so ‘You alright’, ‘Yeah’, and this, that and the other, so just a quick ‘Hello’ and that’s it, never really have any problems.

INT: Ok. … So what does friendship actually mean to you?

AL: Trust [INT: yeah], erm you’ve got to be able to rely on er, I suppose you’ve got to have, yourself aren’t just relying on them you need to be able to say you know ‘This is my best mate’, you’ve gotta turn round and say he’s the same, I’m the same to him, so you’ve gotta be able to say ‘I will take responsibility, I will not tell anyone about this, I will be there for them when they need me’, so it’s, it’s a two way thing you know if he needs you, vice versa, so yeah it’s, I think the main aspect is trust.

INT: OK, cool. I just wanna have a quick go through and make sure I haven’t missed anything out that I was supposed to be looking at. … I think we’ve covered, I think we’ve covered the main points. Is there anything that, that erm, that occurred to you while we’ve been talking, about friends and friendships, and stories of friendships and what have you that we’ve not really …?

AL: I suppose as we’ve been speaking you actually said you know you’ve had friends here and there, you can always say friends come and go, but you know the ones that are really important to you, you should always try to keep in touch with and keep around you, cause you never know when you’ll next need them, because I reckon at the end of your life you might have your kids and everything but you know, you’ve, in the same, you’ve never got someone really else in the same boat that’s sort of say, because you know there’s always a difference, yes people have gone through the same things but once you’ve sort of lost your parents, your older generation then you’re the oldest generation in the family, you haven’t really got anything to compare with, you always think you can’t, like now I’d say to my mum ‘Ah this, that and the other, I hate life, this is crap’, and she’d say ‘Oh I went through this, you know it’s difficult, this that and the other’, and you know she’s there to give you advice and you know talk through her life experience and any other adult can do that, but once you’ve lost that I reckon you need your friends because you’re going through the same things at the same time, cause yeah you speak to, well I speak to my grandparents about life and stuff like that, but when I’m that age I don’t think I’ll remember that much, it’s difficult enough now to remember just as much, erm so I reckon you need them throughout your whole life and if you stick with someone that’s been through, with you through your whole life you can sit back and say ‘Oh just have a laugh about when you were younger, what you got up to’, you know just see life pass and yeah help each other through the later stages of life as well you know.

INT: So the friends that say you went to school with over here, erm even if, I mean they haven’t ended up at the same uni as you or anything like that, but obviously they’re still at uni most of them I guess [AL: yeah], um so you’re still sharing that sort of experience, are there friends that you had at school who haven’t gone on to uni, they’ve like gone on to jobs or something like that?

AL: Erm one friend, er she’s erm, she’s, Open University, she went on to work erm and then realised that she could do, needed erm a degree to help her along and so she’s erm done an Open University degree and working at the same time [INT: ok], erm …

INT: So her life’s quite different to yours, sort of you know full time student?

AL: Yeah, yeah, she, she moved over to ((University Town)) not long after I did and weirdly enough we only er meet up really ((in local town)) when everyone’s round, we’re so close, we’re literally ten minutes away from each other and do not see each other, erm but, yeah erm as in some of the older ones have got jobs, they erm never went to, some of them didn’t go to university, they’re now starting university cause they’re realising that they can’t do anything else without a degree, erm but I think the majority of them did go to university because erm ((SCHOOL NAME)) was a grammar school who sort of tried to erm enforce university on you, erm and I think yeah my friends all went, my close friends anyway.

INT: Mm ok. Yeah I was, I was sort of, I guess I was fishing a bit erm to see if maybe that friends that didn’t end up in the same sort of situation tended to be the ones that you sort of drifted away from more, but that doesn’t seem to be really …

AL: Well there is one girl who never went to university and I got on really well in school and we always said, I haven’t seen her since school, and we’ve always said ‘Oh we need to do, we need to meet up, meet up’, and er she actually got married last August, she’s younger than me, but thinking about it my mum was what twenty-one when she married as well and I, I can’t imagine me getting married, I’m still a kid inside, I can’t get, no way, erm but yeah she’d been with the same guy since she was what fifteen [INT: really], and erm yeah got invited to the wedding, obviously I couldn’t go with it being in August and my dad [I. oh right, ok], and I still haven’t met her, she’s moved in with him, she said ‘Oh we need to meet up’ and ‘Oh come round to my place’, and it’s like ‘No’, and no I can’t, I haven’t emailed her for ages, and there’s one girl who’s a DJ and she jets around the world and she’s busy you know in her business and earning her own money and her own life, I see her every so often, but erm yeah.

INT: Is it, is it sort of harder when you see her because your lives are so different, or does it not matter?

AL: It doesn’t matter.

INT: It doesn’t matter.

AL: You see I, I, I always describe myself as a bit of blue tac you know I mould myself into situations, I mould myself in with people and you know I’m easy going, you know you want a boozy group of friends well I can be a boozy person, don’t expect me to drink too many spirits and stuff, but I’ll stick with the beer and I’ll be rowdy and boozy, or I can be the person who sits, lays back and relaxes, watches a film or plays on the PlayStation as well, like I don’t mind as long as I hang around with some people and they’re nice enough to hang around with.

INT: So depending on the circumstances you’re almost like a different person?

AL: I wouldn’t say a different person, I’m always me.

INT: So what’s the difference?

AL: The difference is that erm the group situation is different as in, I suppose I am different once I’ve had a drink, erm but erm, no I’m, I’m the same me, I’m still erm, it’s just I’m ok in many situations, I enjoy drinking as much as I enjoy relaxing, I enjoy just talking and you know different people, different situations, different people like different things and I suppose I could meet a bunch of strangers who are set in their ways who are looking for a room mate and I’d say ‘Well, I just fit in’ and I’d just go along with them and have no problem with it.

INT: Ok. You said, you said something quite early on in the interview that I wondered, that I was interested in about friends being the family that you choose, and I like the idea of, of choice in friendship, but I suspect it’s not all that, it’s not all that simple because when you talk about the bunch of friends you ended up with erm they happened to be people who spoke to you on the first day of university and all that sort of stuff, and it doesn’t seem to me as much of a choice.

AL: Well I mean I could say it’s fate who you meet, but you still choose if you want to be friends with them [INT: ok] erm I mean, yeah you, I think you, it is in a way, you’re right, you meet a load of people in your life I reckon and you, either you choose, I don’t know if it’s choose, you choosing or it’s fate or something, but erm in a way you try and find the ones that are right for you, I mean this girl that I’ve just met on the internet, I’ve never got on, as I said, so well with someone just by briefly knowing them, erm as if I know her inside out now erm, but I said to her, I said ‘It’s total fate that we’ve met’ absolute, there was, if my dad had not died I would not have met this girl cause I wouldn’t have had the money to go on this trek, erm if my brother would have decided to go on a trek with me I wouldn’t have gone on the same trek as her, there’s so many coincidences, I mean we nearly met each other at er Camp America orienteering, she was in the same room, I was sitting at the back of the room and she was sitting a few rows in front of me, and we didn’t meet, I mean it’s strange how people are in the same room don’t meet but end up weirdly knowing each other somehow through the internet, so in a way it’s fate, but I know that, I’m hoping it means something really special, a special friendship, something that when you, we’ll have to, something’s gunna happen where for some reason we need each other or something, I don’t know, so.

INT: Is there a possibility that something romantic could happen there?

AL: Er no, I thought at first before I met her over the internet, I mean she’s a really good er, I really get on with her, she’s very similar, she’s as clumsy as me, she’s this, that and the other, we’re so similar except when it comes to eating she’s vegetarian and very, very picky on what she eats, she’s a vegetarian that doesn’t even eat salad [INT: ok], yes very strange, erm that’s the only difference I reckon, one of the only differences, and erm, she erm, but I mean she’s a good looking girl, you know she’s got the two combinations, she’d be the perfect girlfriend I thought to myself when I met her and instantly I knew no, not the vibes she was giving me, it was, it just, it wasn’t there, there was nothing.

INT: It was just friends?

AL: Yeah, so, so, I mean who knows what’s in the future, but …

INT: Yeah, yeah, and you’re gunna be with her and a whole bunch of other people for quite a while on the trek so …

AL: Yeah there’s gunna be thirty of us.

INT What, what do you erm, what qualities in other people do you look for in your friends, I mean you’ve talked about trustworthiness, what, what else is important to you?

AL: Yeah trust, what else? That they’re friendly and nice, erm that they accept me for who I am erm, erm I guess enjoy certain interests you know like going for a drink erm … what other qualities, that’s awful [laughs], yeah I want my friends to be able to drink, be able to be trustworthy erm, I don’t know I don’t go out to think I want this to be my friend, er this to be my friend erm.

INT: No this is a fairly sort of artificial question but …

AL: Erm I just, when I meet someone I get, I get, similar interests I think, I reckon [INT: ok], erm because my best friend and I have an interest in travelling both of us, I mean I always liked the idea of travelling but once I went travelling around Europe and America I just got bitten by the travel bug and I just wanna spread my wings and see the whole world, I mean I want to taste and drink myself through it so, I don’t know it’s, it’s sort of similar interests is always a good one.

INT: Ok. Alright well I think I’m done, I’ve sort of gone off script at the end but I don’t mind. So thanks for that.

AL: No problem at all.

INT: I’ll stop the video and then I’ve got one other thing for you.