

Interviewee: Isa Friel (IF) and Willie Friel (WF)	Interviewer: Mhari Telford-Jammeh (M T-J)
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MT-J: We're on the Twenty-seventh of May today, Twenty-twelve, and I'm here talking to Uncle Willie, Willie Friel, and Mrs Friel, Isa Friel. So we had a chat the last time and we talked about what it was like growing up in Langholm, and you say that you were both born in Nineteen-nineteen. And we got to the point that Uncle Bill had started work at the Post Office.

WF: That's right yes.

MT-J: So I'm gonna ask you Aunty Isa now about what you did when you left school?

IF: Oh well I had to leave Langholm in the spring, and I went to Gregg School at Carlisle, by train, and we had to get the quarter past seven train in the morning.

MT-J: Every day?

IF: Yes, every day, well Monday to Friday, and I was there for a year and had shorthand and typing and bookkeeping, and then after that I got a job in Langholm at Elwood's the...

WF: Unemployment exchange.

IF: Yes, unemployment exchange in Langholm, so I was there for not very long really, and then I was at the Ford Mill after that, I got a job in the Ford Mill, and I was in that job for maybe a year, or less, and then I went to Arthur Bell's, Arthur Bell tweeds, in the office there, so, we did shorthand and typing and all sorts of things...bookkeeping...

MT-J: And did you like that kind of work?

IF: Oh yeah I like bookkeeping, and the shorthand and typing was ok because sometimes we got letters dictated to us, and we'd to type them, you know because I did the shorthand you see?

MT-J: And were the mills busy then?

IF: Oh yes, they were making khaki, the soldiers, you know, the material for the garments, and they had a lot of that.

MT-J: And that was before the war still?

IF: No no that was during.

MT-J: Making the khaki. Interesting. And so you were there...were you there right through the war.

IF: I was there until Willie came back in Nineteen forty six, because we went away in Nineteen thirty nine, and he didn't come back until february Nineteen forty six, and I worked at Arthur Bell's

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all these years, but as soon as he came back, I left, and we got a house...well we didn't get a house then because there were no houses, but they were starting to build the prefabs, so when the prefabs were ready we moved up to [Holmewood], where there was...about twenty I think houses and they were all for ex...men who had been in the forces.

MT-J: So when you started work at the mill, first of all and you were doing your shorthand typing at Carlisle, were you living at home then?

IF: Yes, travelled every day by train.

MT-J: Living with your mother?

IF: Yes, uh huh. Brothers, one brother and sister.

MT-J: And were they working?

IF: Yeah, Jim worked at the shop, at the joiners shop.

WF: They weren't working, they were at the school when you started working. He was at the school when I used to come on leave.

IF: He would be. And Nancy she worked in the...

WF: Murray's shoemaker.

IF: She worked, yes, in Murray the shoe shop, but she was called to work in the mill, she had to go to the mill and work there because they wouldn't allow her to work in a shop.

MT-J: What, during the war?

IF: That's right.

MT-J: So she had to work making khaki or whatever as well?

IF: Yes, but lots of the girls, if they weren't called up for the ATS, a lot of them went to Gretna, to the munitions factories there. In fact four of the Langholm girls were killed.

MT-J: What, in the munitions factory?

WF: Explosion.

IF: Yes, there was an explosion in the hut that they were working.

MT-J: I've heard of that. And did they stay at Gretna?

IF: No no, there was a bus travelled every day taking them.

MT-J: And you were both nineteen when the war broke out?

WF: When the war started yes.

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MT-J: And what did you do Uncle Bill, when the war broke out, were you still working in the Post Office?

WF: I was in the Post Office, on the First of September Nineteen thirty nine, and it was a late afternoon when this company sergeant major came in [a public ?] and said to me, 'Friel, you're in the army now, get out of here and get down to drill hall, we need you.' So I'd to...I finished balancing and I was just going off duty so I finished balancing, went in and saw the postmaster and said, 'Here are my keys sir I'm away to the army, cheerio,' and that was it.

MT-J: As quick as that?

WF: As quick as that.

MT-J: And had you been in the territorial army or anything before that?

WF: I was in the territorial army then! I'd only been in eighteen month mind, and when I went to join first of all I couldn't get in it was full! So they doubled up when Hitler started fun and games on the continent, and I went down right away and joined again, didn't want to miss anything.

MT-J: And so where did you go first of all?

WF: Well, we spent the first night at Dumfries, Rosefield Mills lying on hard concrete. Then we went up to...

IF: Well they had a bus to take the territorials frae the drill here.

WF: Aye the bus took us.

MT-J: Where was the drill hall?

IF: Brewery Brae.

WF: Brewery Brae. Isa and I were both christened in that place, in the church. So the bus took us to Dumfries and as I say we stayed in Rosefield Mills overnight, then we went up to South Queensferry area, and I was in Kirkliston, living wi' a private family you know. We had the village hall, it was Eight Company, we had the village hall, and I was company stores clerk. Battalion headquarters was looking for clerical people so they pinched me, and I was taken down to South Queensferry where I joined battalion headquarters. I was wi' them for a long time.

IF: Looking on to the Forth Bridge.

MT-J: Oh looking on to the Forth Bridge?

IF: Underneath the Forth Bridge.

WF: Yeah, I were there when the German air raid came over. First air raid on Britain, I think October Nineteen thirty nine, three German planes tried to bomb the Forth Bridge. Unsuccessful.

MT-J: And did you hear from him during that time Aunty Isa, when he was away?

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IF: Oh yes. Before he left, we happened to be at the pictures, and that night he said would I write to him, after he was away?

WF: A big courtship, a very big courtship!

MT-J: A very big courtship!

IF: So I said ok, I'll send you a letter!

MT-J: Very good!

WF: So we wrote every...we always wrote efter that didn't we?

IF: Yeah. Fergie [Perk] used to bring the letters to me if I got a letter frae Willie, Fergie the postman used to bring it down.

MT-J: And would he know that it was frae Willie?

IF: Oh yeah! I was ayeways in the post office you see as well.

MT-J: Can you mind what you saw at the pictures that night before he went?

IF: Oh no I can't.

WF: Not a clue.

MT-J: No? So you were up at Kirkliston, and you were still in the mill at that...you were in the mill at Arthur Bell's, making khaki? And what happened in Langholm? I know that there was a big army camp, but can you remember much about...?

IF: A lot of the boys were called up you see, some into the air force, some into the army, some into the navy, and they were all the younger...well I tell you what, the twenty year olds were all called up, anybody that was twenty was first...that was the first intake.

WF: That's right, yeah.

MT-J: But in Langholm itself was there a lot of new...I mean the army came here didn't they to train...was that later?

WF: Not at first.

IF: No, I think it'd be Nineteen forty one.

WF: We had the commandoes here, they were the first ones that came.

IF: No, I don't think so.

WF: They lived in private houses, they'd no drill hall or anything then.

IF: No that wasn't the first lot Willie, it was the Royal Engineer and the Pioneer corps that came to  
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build the camp. They came first.

MT-J: And then the commandoes.

IF: And the commandoes came.

WF: The commandoes didn't live in the camp though.

IF: No they didn't.

MT-J: So where did they live?

IF: They lived...they were billeted on private houses.

MT-J: Why was that then, because they were like officers?

WF: They were special troops.

MT-J: So they weren't put in hardship camp.

WF: They were given an allowance. Instead of going into huts, each commander was given a good allowance to pay for lodgings. Some of them stayed in hotels! The Eskview Bank Hotel had some of them, cause my friend who retired back to [?] in Langholm he was billeted as a commando, and he was here twice because they went on raids you see, they went to the Falkland Islands from Langholm, and when they came back, Stewart [Ingham's] his name he lived in Ovens' family, you know Jenny Ovens and whatshername...

IF: Morrison.

WF: Mrs Morrison, yep, her family. He lived with them. When he came back he was in the Eskview Bank Hotel, he thought he'd go in the hotel for a change.

MT-J: Very good! So do you remember when you were living in Langholm during the war there was a lot of new people, I mean there'd be a lot of different people coming and going?

IF: Well they had a cafe somewhere where the soldiers would come at night.

WF: A canteen.

IF: They could come and have a meal or whatever, you know sandwiches and things like that.

WF: Pies.

IF: Also, when there was any dances, there was always soldiers invited, and there was a lot of dances. In fact, we used to...two of us used to phone frae the mill...some of the girls in the mill you see wanted to have dances, so they would say, 'Will ee phone the camp and arrange for the band to play at a certain dance?'

MT-J: So the army band...?

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IF: Yes.

WF: Oh aye all the battalions had dance bands.

MT-J: So they would come and play, so where did they play, in the Buccleuch Hall?

IF: Milligan's Hall it was.

WF: Where Raymond has his workshop.

IF: That's right. Of course it was burnt down later on you see.

MT-J: So would there be a dance every week?

WF: Mostly, a Saturday night.

IF: I should think so, almost.

MT-J: And did you ever go?

IF: Oh yes!

MT-J: And what kind o' tunes did they dance to during the war?

IF: Oh all sorts o' things.

WF: Foxtrots...slow foxtrots and waltzes, very nice.

MT-J: And did you ever get home?

WF: Oh yes, aye.

MT-J: Did you get home on a regular basis?

WF: Not a lot, no.

MT-J: And you were mainly in Scotland on training?

WF: No, after we'd been in force for about three month, we came back to Dumfries Rosefield Mills for Christmas, and by then of course they had things organised, they had palliasses for us to sleep on, you know bags o' straw, so we slept on them, and then it got a very cold winter and a lot o' the boys were out digging the trains out...train from Dumfries to Stranraer got snowed in a few times and boys' troops were called out to dig it out. But I was never...cause I was in the battalion orderly room, I had a nice posh job, one o' the lucky boys, never got much work to do...then.

MT-J: Never got the hard graft?

IF: No. So then, you wereny at Dumfries long...

WF: Until three month, and then we went out to Somerset in March, and the change was

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unbelievable. The cold cold weather we had up here, went down to Somerset...it was springtime, it was lovely, shirtsleeves, great.

MT-J: Completely different.

WF: Aye it was.

IF: That was Nineteen forty, the beginning of Nineteen forty.

WF: Forty...and from there, we went to France.

MT-J: I think I'm gonna talk to you about your war...you know...experience in France and Holland, another time, is that ok?

WF: Later on, Mm hmm.

MT-J: I was gonna ask, what year you got married and what kind of wedding did you have?

IF: Right, well, Willie was stationed at Banff, up in Scotland.

WF: Nineteen forty three.

IF: We decided to get married in February Nineteen forty three. So of course he had to come from Banff, to Langholm and I had the wedding arranged that we were going to Eskdale Hotel, but we were only allowed to have twenty five people, because there were restrictions...the food was all rationed.

MT-J: Rationed...so you could only have a certain number of guests?

IF: Yes.

WF: Do you remember where it was? We had it in that room above the front door in the Eskdale hotel.

MT-J: Really?

WF: It's a posh bedroom now, a very posh bedroom that room, but we had the dinner..or the party in there.

MT-J: And did you actually get married in the hotel?

IF: No.

WF: No.

IF: We got married in the Erskine Church

MT-J: In the Erskine church.

WF: And then we went to Edinburgh for our honeymoon.

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MT-J: Oh did you! You got a honeymoon?

WF: We danced every night.

MT-J: Where did you go for your honeymoon then?

WF: We stayed in the Cockburn Hotel, and it was full of generals and colonels, and I was what, a lance corporal then was I Isa?

IF: I think sae!

WF: No, I was a corporal, and here was this corporal and his wife eating breakfast next table'd be a general and his wife next table you'd be a brigadier and his wife, posh place wasn't it?

IF: It was!

WF: Every night we went dancing in the Palais...

IF: We weren't there long mind you though, just two or three nights.

MT-J: And that was the honeymoon.

IF: That was it?

MT-J? Very nice.

WF: Did we go up on the train? I canny remember. Must of got the train.

IF: Yes, it was by train.



MT-J: So would you have got a train from Langholm?

IF: Langholm to Riddings.

WF: And then you got the express at Riddings.

MT-J: Oh you changed at Riddings junction.

IF: That's the Carlisle/Edinburgh train.

MT-J: So how long would it have taken to get to Edinburgh then by train?

WF: Oh, about two hours.

IF: I should think so. In fact we used to go to the...well, before the war it must have been, when the Internationals were on in Edinburgh...

MT-J: To the rugby?

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IF: Yes, lots of people went to the rugby you see by train.

MT-J: By train? So that was the wedding and the honeymoon, and then what did you do after that, where did you live?

WF: Well Isa lived at home.

IF: Well I lived at home.

WF: When I came on leave we lived wi' my folks' didn't we?

IF: We probably did.

WF: When I came back aye. We moved into Douglas Terrace when [ ? ] then he went back to his mother.

MT-J: And that went on till the end of the war did it?

WF: Well after that I wasny...once we were already started, you didny get home much you see then.

MT-J: And then you were abroad. But then after the war, where did you live immediately after the war.

IF: Well soon as Willie come back we...my Aunt Annie said you can come and stay wi' her, she was on her own you see, so we went and we stayed wi' her for a little while but she had an Aunt who had a house in Charles Street new, and she wanted her Aunt to stay with her, so we had to swap houses, and we went to Charles Street new.

WF: Nice little house wasn't it?

IF: Yes it was.

MT-J: So that was the first kind of house of your own?

IF: Yes.

WF: Then after that, Morag was born.

IF: No we went to Douglas Terrace first.

WF: Aye, well it was Douglas Terrace where Morag was born.

IF: It was.

MT-J: So back to your mother's.

IF: That was in Nineteen forty six.

WF: And then after that it was the prefab.

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WF: Cause he was demobbed in Nineteen forty six, which was six and a half years away.

MT-J: And then you got allocated a prefab?

IF: Yes.

WF: Yes.

MT-J: And was that because you'd been in the army that you were given one of these prefabs?

IF: That's right.

WF: There would be nineteen or twenty and every one was allocated to an ex-serviceman. They were all much the same age and all had families growing up together, and they're still here today some o' them, Robbie [Swarick's] one o' them.

MT-J: But they've been bricked round now these houses haven't they? But what were they like when you moved, were you pleased with I when you got it?

IF: It was pretty cold mind you.

WF: Winter, a cold winter, we could see the ice on the walls in the house in the bedroom.

MT-J: A bit like a portocabin?

IF: Yes, similar.

WF: Well the central heating didn't work. It had a special heating hadn't it do you remember? Was it air coming off a little fire in the kitchen without air vents?

IF: Well the living room, not the kitchen.

WF: Well the living room, aye.

IF: Just a little fire.

WF: And was there air vents off it or something? Had vents in every bedroom.

IF: Was there?

WF: Aye they were supposed to be heated supposed to be centrally heated but it never worked.

MT-J: Didn't really work...central heating.

IF: Two bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen.

MT-J: And you had your three children there?

IF: No Morag was born before we went into the house.

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WF: And Billy was born at Dumfries wasn't he?

IF: Morag was born at Dumfries, and then Billy, two and a half years I think after that was born at Dumfries.

MT-J: In the hospital?

IF: Yes.

MT-J: At Cresswell?

IF: Yes. And then Alan was born in the prefabs.

MT-J: When you were having a baby then and you had to get to Dumfries from Langholm, how did you get there?

IF: Oh god, well, we got a private car.

MT-J: A hire?

IF: Yes.

WF: A taxi.

IF: Once, and then I think some people went by bus.

MT-J: In labour!

IF: it was a terrible journey, they had to go to Carlisle and transfer into a bus to get to Dumfries, it's really awkward from here.

MT-J: That must have been terrible!

WF: Jean Annan, I remember Jean Annan came home, and she came home on the bus!

IF: No she went to Carlisle.

MT-J: On the bus from having her baby?

WF: No, they took her too soon, she got fed up o' waiting, so she walked oot and got the bus and came back.

MT-J: So you went a' that convoluted journey to Dumfries just so that you didn't have your baby in Carlisle? Cause it would have been easier wouldn't it, to go to Carlisle?

IF: Yes but we couldn't, we had to pay for it of course as well.

MT-J: Oh did you?

WF: There was a fee then, aye.

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IF: I think I was there a fortnight.

WF: Aye you had a bad time the first time hadn't you?

IF: I think it was about fourteen pounds.

MT-J: Just to go and have your baby in the hospital.

IF: Yes.

WF: That was a lot of money then.

MT-J: And what did people do...women do if they...you know families if they couldn't afford that?

IF: No idea really.

MT-J: Was there any kind of local midwives?

WF: Canny think o' any...yes there was aye, there was midwives.

MT-J: Or even just women that would help deliver your baby?

IF: I think there was.

WF: When Morag was born, Netta Reid was a nurse or a sister in the Cresswell, and when by the time Alan was born she was the district nurse here, and I think she advised you just to stay at home and she would look after ee, and she did.

IF: No.

MT-J: But people would have had to save up money, cause fourteen...what did you say?

IF: Fourteen pounds.

MT-J: That was a lot of money.

WF: Everybody didn't go to Cresswell, I don't know what they did, no idea.

MT-J: They must have just delivered at home.

WF: Be just like in the old days going to Dumfries School, you had to have money before you could go there.

MT-J: Definitely. Interesting isn't it? And I suppose if you got ill as well you would have to pay the doctor cause there was no National Health Service was there?

IF: No there wasn't. Everything had to be paid for.

MT-J: Can you remember that, who was your doctor?

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IF: Dr Caldwell.

MT-J: For any kind of visit to the doctor you would get a bill would you?

IF: Yes, you had to pay.

MT-J: So it paid to keep fit and healthy then! It was an incentive to keep fit and healthy!

IF: I had to get my tonsils out once and I had to go to Dumfries to get the tonsils out.

MT-J: What do you remember about that?

IF: Oh maybe a couple o' nights, and I think I'd to sleep on a sofa or something.

MT-J: In the hospital! There wasn't any beds?

IF: No.

MT-J: Oh dear, crumbs. So no National Health Service.

IF: But I tell you another thing about the beginning o' the war, we got all these evacuees frae Glasgow, oh really it was awful.

WF: Dozens o' them.

IF: It was awful. They would sit on the street, they were sitting on the High Street on the kerbs and oh, crowds o' them. And eventually, they wouldny stay, a lot o' them went away back.

MT-J: They didny want to stay in Langholm.

IF: No, too quiet you know compared to Glasgow.

WF: They were used to Glasgow the busy streets and tram cars and things.

MT-J: And was that women and children or was it...?

IF: Oh yes.

WF: Boys and girls mainly, kids.

IF: There was quite a few stayed, in different families.

MT-J: And where did they stay?

IF: Well Ella and Mary had two girls, and other people who had rooms in their house they had to take them.

WF: Oh aye, we had to take them.

MT-J: And how did they get on wi' them, how did they like having them?

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IF: Oh they liked fine, they enjoyed themselves, they used to take them picnics, and I've got photographs o' the two girls that they had. And they had a brother as well, and he was wi' somebody else. Sometimes they got split up, and the families wereny kept together.

MT-J: And these kids must have went to school as well?

IF: Oh aye.

WF: Oh yes they did.

MT-J: So there would be a new...quite an expansion of the school?

IF: Of course.

WF: A' got jumbled up, [ ? ].

MT-J: So you were in the prefabs and you had the three children and then you eventually got another house?

WF: We got a big house just across the road from the prefab, another council house, we were in that for eighteen month.

IF: Well they were building the houses you see when we were in the prefabs, so we had to wait until there was a house available.

MT-J: So that was when Holmwood was really getting built?

WF: Exactly. There was no streets as such, we used to walk through puddles and glaur to get to the house.

MT-J: So you were living in the middle of a building site?

IF: That's right.

WF: Well they were building the estate for years.

MT-J: For years?

WF: Aye.

MT-J: So you got a bigger house?

WF: Got a bigger house, and after that we decided it was time we bought our own house, and we bought our own house in...Caroline Street, what was the number again?

IF: Eighty seven I think.

WF: Eighty seven Caroline Street, and paid an almighty sum of seven hundred and fifty pounds for it.

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MT-J: Oh my goodness. And you lived there...

IF: It needed a lot of alterations, we'd to do a lot o' alterations to it.

WF: Uncle Jim was busy he made a new...kitchens and the bathroom and a' that was a' altered wasn't it, the kitchen renovated. But it was super house. Then we just got it done and I got promotion, away.

MT-J: And so you moved away?

WF: I went to Wales.

MT-J: So you moved away from Langholm mainly cause you got promotion?

WF: Yeah.

MT-J: And did you have any second thoughts about moving away, given that you were both from here and you both had family here? Was there quite a big...?

IF: Well...

WF: Not really, cause I wanted, you know, being away in the army, and I'd got promotion in the army, and I felt I wasny doing...I was having a peaceful time here I was used to striving, and I wanted to get a job in management. I was applying for postmaster's job it, was my blame we got shifted away.

MT-J: So it was kinda...there was a lead up to it it wasny like out of the blue?

IF: Oh no. I mean actually when we got the job in Rhaeadr...

WF: In Wales.

IF: ...You said there was one in Orkney or somewhere as well.

WF: I was in for four jobs. I was in for Rhaeadr Mid-Wales I was in for Stromness in the Orkney's, Pickering in Yorkshire and there was a fourth one I can't remember what it was, and I got the Welsh one. Hadn't a clue where it was!

MT-J: And did you get to choose?

WF: No! I just got a phone message it'd be main postmaster, 'Rhaeadr oh aye where's that?' and got the map oot and saw where it was! And then we discovered there was a Welsh family living in Langholm that knew the area very well.

MT-J: Oh right!

WF: And they still had family in the district.

MT-J: So that was handy?

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WF: That was quite handy, yeah.

MT-J: So you got a contact before you went there?

IF: Yes.



WF: Exactly. Oh aye.

MT-J: So what about the family...Morag and Billy and Alan, did they like to move?

IF: Oh Morag...no Morag didn't.

WF: Morag was in tears a' the time, the boys were a'right but Morag was broken hearted she was at that age you know when she was...what was Morag when we left?

IF: She was about thirteen or fourteen.

MT-J: Oh yes, so she'd have all her pals here?

WF: Oh she'd all her pals and she [?] new school wi' a Scottish voice and an English grammar school, she was well out of place. But! That didn't last long because when the exams started she was head and shoulders above the English people.

IF: The Welsh.

WF: Better educated here than they were down there, so she topped the class.

IF: And she was moved into the senior class then.

WF: Then she started playing hockey for the school she was in.

MT-J: And did you still come back to Langholm?

WF: Oh yes as often as we could.

IF: Just when we had a holiday.

WF: I came back...well no 'member one weekend we came up on Friday afternoon back on the Sunday.

MT-J: That was a long way.

IF: What was that for?

WF: I don't know but we had Mrs [?'s] sister with us.

IF: Yeah we did.

MT-J: And you would have come up...did you come back up for the common riding?

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WF: Morag and them got a lift up.

MT-J: They got a lift up!

IF: There was the Royal Welsh Show started at Builth Wells, and this firm from [?], they had a stall you see or some connections there, and they offered to take the boys one time.

WF: We met Tommy Potts and his wife, and what's that other guy [?].

MT-J: Ronnie Mowbry.

WF: Ronnie Mowbry. Ronnie was the main driver, he was the boy that brought out Morag and the boys up.

MT-J: Oh right?

WF: And he drove fast cars the boys were thrilled to bits. He had a Lotus...Ford Lotus I remember, one of the first Lotus Ford's and Ronnie had one. He use to go like a bat oot o' hell.

MT-J: So they came up to Langholm for the common riding? And where would they stay...wi' their Granny, wi' Granny?

IF: No, the boys stayed wi' Grampa Friel.

WF: Uh huh. Did Morag stay wi' your mother?

IF: Yes I think she did...yes she did.

WF: Did we come up then too to bring them back then?

IF: We must have yeah. But we couldny come because it was the Royal Welsh Show.

WF: I couldny come because I had a mobile post office at the Royal Welsh Show.

MT-J: Oh right! Very good.

WF: So I was tied up you see.

MT-J: And then after you were in Wales you moved on again, you moved to Middlesex didn't you?

IF: Yeah, well after Rhaeadr, we were on the Rhaeadr a year and a half when we moved to Builth Wells, and we were in Builth Wells for four years.

WF: And that was another promotion you see, I actually applied for that.

MT-J: Still climbing the ladder!

WF: Tongue in cheek, I mean I'd only been in Rhaeadr what...a year and a bit? And Builth Wells came up in a post office circular you see? So, just tongue in cheek I put my name and form into the head postmaster at Llandrindod Wells. So he phoned me on the Monday morning and says, 'What's

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this Mr Friel I've got an application for you wanting to be postmaster at Builth Wells?' Oh I says, 'It's a better promotion isn't it, worth a lot more money?' He said, 'I thought you'd want to go back to Scotland?' I said, 'There's no promotion in Scotland, I'm alright, I've applied for everything.' He says, 'Right, you've got the job.'

MT-J: Very good!

WF: I says, 'How d'you know I've got a job I've just applied?' He says, 'All the applications go to London and then they come back to me and I pick out the one I want and I'm telling you you've got the job.'

MT-J: Excellent.

WF: So that was great.

IF: So after Builth Wells, we went to...well, Middlesex, London.

WF: Ashford Middlesex, just next door to Heathrow.

MT-J: And I'm gonna skip that bit but then...so you were there for quite a long time and then you retired back to Langholm again?

WF: Yeah, we did.

MT-J: So what year was that?

IF: Nineteen eighty...two?

WF: Back to Langholm yeah, we retired in Eighty one and we stayed a year down there because we'd so much to see, that I'd been working all hours you see, so we stayed an extra year and we went round about places that we'd never seen...had a year's holiday didn't we?

IF: Mm hmm.

WF: Then we came back in Eighty two.

MT-J: And when you came back to Langholm...so that was about...how were you away for, about twenty odd years?

WF: Eighty one to...

IF: Sixty eighty two, twenty two years.

WF: Aye twenty odd...twenty two years

MT-J: Twenty two years. How did you find Langholm when you came back, what...was it different?

WF: Much quieter. The mills were beginning to slow down a bit, weren't they?

IF: Yeah.

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WF: They weren't shut then they shut since we arrived back, but they were slowed down...you know the writing was on the wall. And of course, got no demand I mean the foreign tweed was coming in, the foreign clothing and that you see.

IF: No it was the jeans you know.

MT-J: Denim?

IF: Denim.

WF: Denim, that's what killed them, the tweed mills.

MT-J: And was there still people here, I mean there was still families here but there was still people here that you knew?

IF: Oh yes!

WF: Oh yes, aye. My parents' were still here.

MT-J: And did you feel you just kind of slotted back in again?

WF: Yeah. In fact the day I came back, I was through at the flower show judging the flowers, I'd been 'booked' to do it! Told them I was retiring [ ? ] 'Oh then we'll book you to judge the flowers.' And I drove from London overnight, remember?

IF: We did, yes.

WF: We left on Friday night and got back here about...what, five in the morning I think, I went to bed for two or three hours and then we went through to judge the flowers.

MT-J: And you were asked to judge the flowers cause you've always been such a tremendous gardener.

WF: A keen flower man, yes.

MT-J: And just looking out there today, I mean, you're ninety two the pair of you but your garden looks wonderful?

WF: Amazing, yeah.

MT-J: Do you think that keeps you fit?

WF: Oh, keeps us...well we're always padding about out there aren't we?

IF: Mm hmm, yeah.

WF: We canny do as much now of course, other people help us.

MT-J: But what have you got planted in your garden now? Vegetables?

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IF: Onions, yes.

WF: Well the garden's full of vegetable, potatoes and...

IF: Onions and...

WF: Hey them craws have been at the...

IF: Onions?

WF: No, the beans, some of them are lyin' oot been pulled oot. Must have been the craws. Nowt else.

IF: Well the big jackdaws I ca' them.

WF: That's who it is, jackdaws.

MT-J: So since you came back to Langholm did you sort of have a bit of a social life what kind of things did you do since retiring?

WF: In Langholm? Scottish country dancing.

MT-J: And you liked that?

WF: Because we were doing that in London you see.

IF: He never danced before, but when we were in Ashford, we joined the Feltham Scottish, because one o' the postmen told Willie that his neighbour...

WF: I asked him if there was any Scottish country dancing cause Isa and Morag were both Scottish country dancing, so yes, so I took Isa and Morag in the car, and I was sitting in the hall watching them you see getting ready to dance, and these two big girl came up and said, 'Well who are you then?' I says, 'Oh I'm the chauffeur that's my wife and that's my daughter they're both keen Scottish...I don't dance.' So they says, 'You're starting tonight, get up.'

MT-J: Very good!

WF: And that was it, and since then more I never stopped until age caught up wi' me when I was eighty eight I decided to stop. We danced all our lives.

MT-J: So you danced when you came back?

IF: We danced in...

WF: Wherever we could find a dance...a Scottish country dance, we went.

IF: Porchester Hall and goodness knows how many places in London.

WF: Hammersmith Palais in London, Porchester Hall. What was that place in the country in Surrey we went to?

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IF: White...

WF: Whitely Village.

MT-J: So that would keep you fit as well?

IF: Oh yes.

WF: Certainly did.

MT-J: And any other interests, cause I know that you're involved with the British Legion?

WF: Yes, well I've just recently joined it in Langholm here because it's gone back a bit and it needed support so I joined it to give them a wee bit support.

MT-J: And also you were on the community council for a while?

WF: Oh yes, for quite a while I was a community counsellor. I left that too because of age...climbing that hill on a cold winter night I got browned off!

MT-J: So you've kind of still been quite active in the community as well?

WF: We've been active. We've never laid back since we came back have we?

IF: Not really.

WF: We've never stopped. We're in the church we go to the church every Sunday, don't we?

IF: We do now.

MT-J: And when you look at Langholm now how does it compare if you think about your youth, and you've grown?

WF: I tell you what [works/irks] on us a bit, we're that old, most of our friends have gone.

MT-J: Aye.

IF: There's only one person that was in our class, that still lives in Langholm. The rest are all dead.

MT-J: And that must be quite a funny feeling?

WF: It's a funny feeling yeah.

IF: It is.

MT-J: There's no contemporaries.

WF: We know their sons and we know their daughters, and they know us, but then their grandchildren know us and we don't know them.

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MT-J: Yes. And you must know, I mean there's no many other people apart from each other that you can talk to about things that happened in the past?

WF: That's right, no, it's a fact, no.

IF: That's right.

MT-J: So your memories are...well I suppose our memories are kept alive by sharing them with other people.

IF: Of course, well when we went to the guides and things like...and the brownies and all the you know everything...country dancing we went to. But now you see there's nobody alive to speak to.

WF: When I was in the scouts before I started working I was in the scouts but when I started working in the post office...working Monday to Friday, eight...nine in the morning to six at night, six days a week, delivering telegrams, did that for two years and then I sat the civil service exam because the post office was part of the civil service then, and after a certain age you had to hold a civil service certificate, or you wouldn't get employed. So when I sat the exam I passed high enough to become a counter clerk, so I was never a postman I went from boy messenger right behind the counter. Then I went to Glasgow for training.

MT-J: Ok, well I think we've had a grand chat again, thank you, I don't know if there's anything else I should ask you about I suppose, just, you know Langholm now has...it is very different, the mills aren't working anymore.

IF: And the people are different as well, cause there's an awful lot of people travel to Carlisle and different places. With transport now they can go anywhere nearly, I mean some travel about sixty miles.

WF: I tell you what we miss most of all Mhairi, when the mills were working, these streets were full o' people.

MT-J: Yes I know.

WF: At teatime, at lunchtime, and they got an hour for their lunch and they went home and they had their lunch and walked back to the mill! Some people living in Eskdale Street, and where my

mother lived on Douglas terrace, Lottie Davidson walked from [Neilswell] to Douglas Terrace bought her lunch and walked back again.

MT-J: There's nobody going...they used to go past on bikes and everything.

WF: Exactly, bikes and walking mainly.

MT-J: So it's very quiet now isn't it.

IF: Oh definitely.

WF: Oh the High Street was busy, you went to the High Street in lunchtime, oh it was just a continual stream of people going one way and next coming back and forward. You could say hundreds o' people...well maybe no hundreds but quite a lot of people on the High Street walking.

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MT-J: Do you think the population I mean I kinda think the population here is quite different, I mean there's a lot of new people coming and people coming to retire here...very different population.

IF: Yes it is.

WF: Not a working population like it used to be, not mill workers.

MT-J: No. But also the people who were here, say when you were growing up, probably had been here for generations, but that's no really quite the same any more is it?

IF: No.

MT-J: It's a different population.

WF: There's still some long serving families, Johnson's for instance, and there's Laidlaw's that's an old family isn't it? And the Little's, quite a lot of Little's still you know, same family.

MT-J: So there's still these families that have been here for hundreds of years?

WF: When I was a boy when I was, what, eight/nine/ten I was in the band, the town band, and that was made up of families too. There were five Johnston's, all the same family playing in the town band, five o' them!

MT-J: I think it's still like that though the band actually, it's still families.

IF: And the Laidlaws' of course.

MT-J: The Laidlaws'.

WF: The Reids' now.

MT-J: Reids'. Jeffreys'. There's a lot of the same families when you actually look at the band, and I



mean there's three sisters isn't there...the Elliot sisters. I think there's three o' them in?

WF: Aw they're no there now of course.

IF: No there's one girl away somewhere.

MT-J: Oh is there?

WF: Well there's one...is one o' them not in the south?

IF: She's in the Midlands I think cause she met that other boy that was in the Langholm band, they met at Coventry or somewhere like that.

WF: They both played for a band in the Midlands, what's-her-name...Nancy McLure's boy, he played for some band in the Midlands and the Elliot girl does too.

MT-J: Oh right I see ok.

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WF: And another Elliot sister is outside Edinburgh, she comes down occasionally and plays in the band.

MT-J: Well I think we've had a good chat.

WF: We certainly have, yeah.

MT-J: We'll maybe draw to a conclusion, so thank you very much but I'll come back another night Uncle Bill and talk to you about your war experiences.

WF: Well your bring your steel helmet then will ee'?

MT-J: I'll bring a steel helmet, okay! Thank you very much!

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