

Interviewee: Robin Kinnear (RK)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
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JMW: Right, if you can tell me a little bit about how your family came to be here and how the business was started.

RK: My grandfather was a traveller for a Glasgow drapery firm and called in this area and became very friendly with a Mr Goodwin in Port William who had a thriving tailor's business and my grandfather and he got on very well and in November 1898 he set up business in Mr Goodwin's shop, eventually leasing it in 1899 and starting business there. He lived in the flat above the shop and his main trade was suit manufacturing and I don't know, they had a large number of compartments and shelves for cloth, but I don't know what it was because all the suits were navy blue serge, no-one ever had anything else (laughter) so they must just have had various shades of navy blue serge. In 1904 Mr Goodwin became rather jealous of my grandfather's success and he broke the lease and demanded more money which my grandfather was most annoyed about, but Sir Herbert Maxwell, my father had become a great friend with the factor, Mr Walker, H H. Walker, and Sir Herbert Maxwell gifted the site opposite Goodwin's shop for my grandfather to build there. Business thrived and being the old agricultural structure with a hiring fair in May and November people were paid then so their accounts were rendered six monthly, which would be rather awkward to try and do business in this present day, but this is the way that it worked and they would come and they would buy six months' drapery and pay for it six months later. In 1908 my grandfather tried to lease a shop in Garlieston, but he eventually managed to lease it in 1935 but he was obviously keen to expand and he did travel but with pony and trap and they used to go out...a gentleman in 1908 joined the staff, by the name of Johnny Bell, and he was really like a minstrel, he would go round and they had to travel fair distances with this pony and trap and he would stay the night at the farthest point and would entertain people who were looking after him with his fiddle and had a great musical evening and they looked forward to him coming every few months and a whole day's journey was from Port William to Kirkinner and perhaps round by Garlieston, and not getting back until maybe ten o' clock at night and counting the money, which was just in coin, more or less, a big day would be maybe six pounds or seven pounds. In 1937 we purchased a shop in Whithorn and then later, in the '50s, we bought a furniture showroom in Whithorn which my father tended to favour, he was very much into the sale of furniture especially with term customers moving some distance away, perhaps to Kirkcudbrightshire and we would follow up with our vans with samples of drapery and settle their accounts, as I said, every six months.

0.04.38

Now, once we got into the '50s, when I joined the staff, we managed to reduce the credit terms to three months and normal...that was the only reason we had to be three months was that was the circuit, that you could only get round them every three months. We had so many customers from Ayrshire to Kirkcudbrightshire, Dumfriesshire, right round to the Mull of Galloway so we had a big area to cover and we had, at one time we had three vans, three travellers going out. In 1971 we bought a shop, another shop in Port William, which we would make into a furniture showroom but unfortunately in 1982 we had a fire in the drapery shop, the one that my grandfather had built, so it was not very suitable after the

stink of burning, we swapped over, we put the drapery shop into the furniture store and the furniture store into the drapery and we carried on at that. And in 1998 we had our centenary celebrations in a restaurant which was converted from the original building of Mr Goodwin's so we had our hundredth anniversary in the building where we actually started with my grandfather.

JMW: That's fantastic. You mentioned the tailors and how they sat, can you tell me a little bit about that?

RK: Yes, we had, in the new shop we had nearly twenty employees in the shop. You had about four or five downstairs serving on the counter because by that time we were in drapery and various other items and we had a separate outside stair up to the second floor where all the tailoring was done, where the tailors all sat cross-legged and we had lady seamstresses in and we did eventually get a sewing machine and we had a big oven where you had the goose irons placed in to heat and they were, the sleeves and the trousers, were pressed and ironed on a board sitting on your knee, they operated doing that and there were quite a lot of junior employees and it was quite surprising, you had a register of all those employees under sixteen and then you had another one for seventeen to twenty.

JMW: Right.

RK: And you had to keep a register of all these people that you had and I still have these figures there. Pricing, I think, was really quite interesting, the difference between a gent's made to measure suit, fifty-two and sixpence, say two seventy five, to a gent's livery suit which was five pounds, five fifty for Monreith House, which had silver buttons, and a livery suit for Elrig House which was over seven pounds because they had gold buttons, so there was quite a big rise between the ordinary gentlemen's suit...that would be a business man's suit which would be about fifty shillings, there's an enormous rise to clothing for the employees of the estate, they spent that amount on it.

0.08.45

JMW: So those would be household servants that would wear the livery, would they?

RK: Yea, they were the coachmen that drove the coaches back and forward.

JMW: Right.

RK: And the pony and traps and gigs, they would always be in uniform and then the butler always had a uniform, he would have a livery as well.

JMW: Fascinating.

RK: Yes.

JMW: And did you also sell agricultural clothing or was that not the kind of thing you sold?

RK: Yes, well, during my time, of course, a big lot of agricultural clothing was sold, bib and brace overalls, all the dairymen always got bib and brace overalls with very long legs and then cut the bottoms of the legs and made patches for the knees because when they were (couping?) milk buckets, milk butts, they were always doing it with their [?], that went into a cooler and ran down because we didn't have bulk tanks and things in those days. But we sold milking feckets which were striped tunic jacket but was known as a fecket and it was blue and white striped, the same stripe as a butcher's apron, and then they had, of course,

bunnets and socks and all the other general ware that they would wear for milking and for ploughing and latterly, after the Second World War, there was a lot of Army surplus which was distributed by a firm, Mallet Porter and Dowd, in London, and they would sell on these second hand uniforms which were ideal for tractor men and for ploughmen walking along because they had a big greatcoat or and they had some of the big parkas with the fur hoods and they had to have completely waterproof trousers because there was no cabs and things then on the carts or tractors, they needed to be very, very well clad so we did sell a big lot of that.

JMW: I must admit I've never heard the word 'fecket' before.

RK: Yes, well that's f-e-c-k-e-t, fecket.

0.11.11

JMW: And do you think that's a Galloway word or do you think it's a more general-?

RK: No, it's a milking, fecket, it would be known through the dairy trade I would think.

JMW: Right, right. That's fascinating that you have a specific word...that you can see the history of costume, as it were.

RK: Yes, yes, and you had a lot of lady agricultural workers so they bought bib and brace overalls but without a fly, so we had ladies' bib and brace overalls as well as...sometimes when some of the ladies came in, mind, you never knew whether you should sell them ladies' or gent's, (laughter) they were pretty rough, tough characters. They could work every bit as well as the men could.

JMW: Yes, yes. I suppose in terms of more refined clothing you would have seen a huge change from people wearing gloves and hats and all the formal wear to much less formal as you went on.

RK: Yes, well I can remember, as a young boy, always putting in a hat, a ladies hat window, a millinery window, the week before Communion and most people would come in and see the hats but they wanted to come upstairs to see the hats that hadn't been shown in the window because they didn't want to go to church on Sunday and let the people see that they had bought their hat out of the front of the window in Kinnear's. So there was quite a lot of rivalry then but no-one ever went to church without a hat and they nearly always wore a ladies' costume, very often with a fur, a separate fur clipped on, and they're very much in their Sunday best and they were very well turned out for that and we used to make ladies' costumes as well, we had a...again, a firm, when we discovered it was becoming so expensive to make suits in the premises, we could get them cheaper from Yorkshire so we got ladies' costumes made there as well but we still had our tailors to do the alterations. But that would all finish coming up to just after the Second World War, the First World War, sorry. But that would be when the actual manufacturing side would break down, we were much better buying the suits in or getting them made to measure actually, down south, just sending the measurements off, which was common trade then.

JMW: Some, at one point it means that you would be able to buy a suit made in Port William and perhaps boots and shoes made locally as well.

0.14.11

RK: Yes, yes. Well, there were, in the early 20th century, late 19th century, there were a lot of shoemakers and boot makers, some of them repairers who would actually make 'kip' boots, the big curly toed boots but the main place for them was in Maybole, they manufactured boots and we usually got them from there, originally, but then you had shoe firms which came round from England selling them.

JMW: Now, you called them 'kip' boots.

RK: Kip boots, yes, they were a herd's boot, they were a sort of one piece upper, they didn't have a toecap and they had a definite set on the sole, a curvature on the bottom of the sole, heavily tacketed with heel shods and toe shods, and you tended to roll along the grass in them when you were walking, going out, especially...well I know a lot of herds wore them, shepherds, but a lot of farm workers wore that type of boot as well because they were completely waterproof. That would be before the Wellington boot would come out so would keep their feet dry and warm.

JMW: And what about aprons, that seems to be something that people don't wear very much anymore but you always see them in pictures?

RK: Yea, well, we had Dutch aprons which was just an apron from the waist down, then you had a pinafore which was round your neck and tied behind you and had a bib on it. Then there were Dutch overalls which were a pull-over, a complete overall, which came right down to your ankles, more or less, and had a tie and then there was a wrap-over, all cotton, all patterned cotton for ladies, and then you had proper pinarettes which were very fancy, afternoon tea...things for serving. So we had a big selection of Dutch aprons, pinarettes, ordinary pinafores, and the overalls, Dutch overall and wrap-about overall.

JMW: Obviously nowadays there's much less distinction between what people wore on a Sunday and what they wore on a weekday and there's also much less in the way of occupational costume...you used to be able to recognise somebody by what they were wearing almost.

RK: Yes.

JMW: Is that something you noticed as time went on, the change from sort of radical differences between formal and not so formal wear?

0.17.15

RK: Yes, yes, well you always...the grocers in the village all wore warehouse coats and they were all either white or a khaki coloured.

JMW: Yes.

RK: The hairdressers always wore a grey warehouse coat or short jacket. The butchers, of course, they had their own sort of uniform as well. The fishmonger was, just again, a khaki warehouse coat. We sold warehouse coats and then of course all your mechanics and a lot of lorry, truck drivers wore boiler suits and the...I think, although I can't remember it myself, but all the carters and hiring coaches, horse, maybe four horse and a coach who were going a distance, they all had a sort of uniform. But then, of course, on Sunday everyone was dressed up to the nines in their best suit and similar attire when they went to funerals, everyone was very, very smart for funerals, always got the day off work to go attend the

funerals. There were a lot of people and funerals were always, nearly always in Mochrum from this village and there was always a bus that ran mourners to there and then back again because there were very few cars.

JMW: Yes, I've seen old billheads, and it may even have been your shop, for family mourning, I suppose they had to equip an entire family fairly rapidly.

RK: Yes, that's right. And this was a tremendous urgency, that it could be done for weddings and funerals, was getting a suit made up quickly if it was for mourning, you could wire through the measurements or you could phone through to Yorkshire and you would have it in three days which was really quite astonishing and of course if you wrote a postcard off on a Sunday to Glasgow, if you got it away in the post before one o'clock they would phone you up on a Monday morning enquiring about the order you had sent in and it would be sent down that day by train and would come into Whauphill station and there was a lorry from the contractors, McLean the lorry contractor, who went three times a week to Whauphill, so these were all delivered to everyone, all these parcels, very, very rapidly so there hasn't been a tremendous improvement in post and contacts now (laughter).

JMW: No, absolutely.

RK: Internet has certainly become very quickly, that is the biggest improvement, I think, in service now.

0.20.29

JMW: Yes, yes. In terms of the mourning do you remember people wearing crepe round their hats or mourning bands, do you remember that?

RK: No, I can remember them wearing armbands on their jacket for several...several weeks afterwards but not wearing it....they just....the ladies just came as they would be for church in their hats and always in pretty heavy mourning. But what you did notice, if there had been a death in the family, when you walked down the street, all the blinds were drawn, were all closed and that was a sign and a lot of little cottages (coughs) you would...the minister would come and would have the service over the coffin, in the house not at the church, and you would then go from that service where practically only maybe a quarter of the people actually got into the house and you would then go to the interment at the graveyard in Mochrum. But there were a lot of church services done in the houses.

JMW: In terms of the interiors of shops, and things have changed radically, what do you remember or what have you been told about the early shop? What did it look like when customers came in?

RK: Well, the early shop of Goodwin's never altered at all right through Brown and Co and then latterly Miss (Morston?) but it was just two big long counters and the walls all sectioned off into shelves, nearly all forty eight inch wide to take the bolts of cloth.

JMW: Oh, right.

RK: And we subdivided them, again the...our shop was made exactly the same and it had hatches on the ceiling, wooden ceiling, wooden lined walls and you had a hatch in the ceiling because the workmen went from an exterior stair, they didn't come into the shop, so

the contact you had with them was through a hatch and you would put cloth, or reels, or thread, or whatever they needed, you just went up the steps and popped them in up through the hatch and you always had extended steps to go up to the higher shelves to get various things. The shop was altered and modified in several different ways but essentially was just exactly the same until we unfortunately had the fire which charred everything and made an awful smell and it was an awful job getting rid of the smell of it.

JMW: Yes.

RK: But it was, I can remember it very well and up until the third alteration to the shop, making it into a restaurant...one, two, three, it was the third restaurant, they actually took the quarter light above the front door out to put a ventilator, extractor, in and it actually had 'Goodwin' etched in the glass and we were given it but unfortunately one of my sons managed to break it (laughter). As an accident, but it would have been rather nice to have had in my archives to-.

0.24.16

JMW: Indeed, yes. And the floors were wooden planks, were they?

RK: Yes, wooden boards and behind...we eventually put linoleum in the main part of the shop but behind the counter it was wooden floorboards and they were getting very well worn and they were wearing down and the knots were very strong so you had wee lumps in them as well and my job as a young boy coming in, last thing at night was to go around with a lemonade bottle with the cork in it sprinkling water on the wooden floor because of all the dust and things that was on it and then you had to sweep that up and this stopped the stoor flying up in the air but latterly we had it...it was linoleum but a lot of the old shops still just had plain floors.

JMW: And what about lighting in the early days?

RK: It was gas lighting. That was in the early days, there was one shop opposite, the grocer's, they had gas, acetylene lighting, and my grandfather moved, he lived above the shop, he bought *Ormeau* which is...his father was a sea skipper and as a young boy he had gone over in the ferry from Saltcoats to...from Ardrossan to Belfast and always went into Belfast and played in Ormeau Park and when he bought the house it was the Free Kirk manse, he called it *Ormeau* after his youth, as a wee boy, because as they were changing over the ship, docking and reloading he would play in the park and then always came back. So when I went to Ireland the first time I really felt quite at home when I saw the name 'Ormeau'.

JMW: And the shop in Whithorn, was that an existing business that you bought out in the '30s?

RK: Yes, it was, I think it was, the name was Johnny Jibb-

JMW: Ok, I've heard that name.

RK: -because he had a sale, sale notice in the window saying 'Johnny Jibb's trousers are still coming down' (laughter). He was having a sale, a cheap sale but he had this 'Johnny Jibb's trousers are still coming down' and that was a joke...held on to it for quite a long time. But that as where the kitchen shop is, what do you call it?

0.27.11

JMW: Yes, Ket Burn was it?

RK: Ket Burn Kitchens, that was our shop and had a house alongside with a common stair but it was a rather nice old building as well.

JMW: Yes, yes, it's got the Ket going underneath it.

RK: Yes, the Ket Burn, in below it, yes.

JMW: I take it it never flooded?

RK: No, no it never ever flooded but we were always frightened of rats because there was always plenty of rats but they never came up, they never came into the-. And there was actually just the wooden floor of the shop and when you lifted up the planks the burn was down below you.

JMW: Yes, so I understand.

RK: It was quite interesting and then the furniture showroom which we purchased, I can't remember now, oh yes, in the '50s, it was the drill hall during the war, the Army drill hall, they had one there and they had one up where John Wilson lived.

JMW: Right.

RK: There was another hall up there as well.

JMW: And the shop in Whithorn, obviously the frontage that I knew had been modified, perhaps was it in the '60s with the big window?

RK: Yes, yes.

JMW: So prior to that do you remember it with the smaller Georgian windows?

RK: Yes, yes, it was...and it had a little latch, very small double doors which only one side was open and the other little half with a lovely wee brass push handle to get in, it was very nice, and there were real old Georgian windows, they were not the easiest of windows to window dress.

JMW: No.

0.29.06

RK: It was much easier once they got the...but my father saw to that and that was in, just in the, about the sixties, the time it was done.

JMW: And you had an upstairs and a downstairs in Whithorn as well?

RK: Yes, that's right.

JMW: So, what were they, what was the difference?

RK: Well, the same as Port William, the tailoring part in Port William was turned into what we called 'the mantle room' where all the ladies' dresses were on hangers and all the gent's sports jackets and trousers, all the better ware was on the second floor, so this was the same thing. Any ladies wanting dresses, they went up to the room above and there was a fitting room there for them to try dresses on and very...now and then, just very rarely, during a sale you would have a rail with ladies dresses downstairs on the shop floor but it

was so packed, everything was so compressed, on the ground floor that you had to keep the ladies' dresses upstairs. And we had a storeroom up there for bedding and things like that.

JMW: Yes, yes, so I suppose you must have known just about everybody in the town?

RK: Yes, you did, yes. You got...well, I worked for a number of years in Whithorn, while my father was still in Port William.

JMW: I see, yes.

RK: Then I came back to Port William and just travelled back and forward to Whithorn and Garlieston but my main business from then...but I actually...my grandfather, he would do about twenty years or so, and then my father started in 1927 but he would retire in...very early, his sixties, so I actually did the longest share of the business, I did about forty-four years, longer than my father and grandfather. But it's very funny how quickly time passes and all of a sudden you've got a centenary on your hands.

JMW: Absolutely, yes.

RK: It's really quite amazing.

JMW: Yes, and you mentioned the mobile part of the business, how long did that go on to, when did that stop?

RK: About the '80s.

0.31.51

JMW: Really?

RK: About '85. In '85, well in the '70s we would just have two vans and then in the '80s we just had the one big stock van that went round, Mr Carruthers did that, and Mr Anderson, who was the other traveller, he was based mainly in Whithorn shop and just went out on odd days to various things. But the van from Port William, it, as I was telling you earlier, it had a pony and trap where they went out with their drapery, their ladies' [?] socks and aprons and pinafores and things and samples of cloth for people to select suits and they did that on the pony and trap and then, when Johnny Bell joined the staff in 1908, they had an old Model T Ford and then they had a Morris 10 car and all the samples and cases were loaded in, the seats were taken out of the back and there was no front seat, there was just the driver's and all the cases were packed in there and if you had a roll of linoleum or something to deliver it was tied onto to the headlamp and the running board of the car and he would set off with these two...like cannons, coming from the front of his car over the headlights. I can remember it very well, then the first van we got after that was a wee Hillman van and then Mr Carruthers had a series of vans Ford 10 and Bedford vans, and they travelled for quite some time, from 1949 until the late sort of '70s, '80s, it was continued with just the one big stock van.

JMW: So if...did you go to people's houses by appointment with samples of cloth or did they find you or...how did it work?

RK: We had a set run in the van that you would perhaps be doing the Machars area, just a certain part that Mr Anderson didn't do and then you'd move from there to Glenluce and Auchenmalg and then from there up to New Luce, up into the hills, the farms up there, and then you would do Stranraer town, Stoneykirk and Sandhead, Drummore and right down to

the Mull of Galloway and they knew when you were coming, it was a set date so we didn't need to make an appointment but latterly, when people were wanting a carpet measured, then you made an appointment and it was special journey you went to see them. But it was a set run and quite a social occasion when they came because very often, he wouldn't stay in the hotel when he was away, he would stay in customers' houses.

JMW: Right.

RK: And spend the evening selling drapery, maybe arrive at the house at five o'clock just not long after the milking finished and he would have his tea and then bring in all the cases and work until maybe half-eleven at night. And then they would sit and have a good crack or play music or...it was just a social evening. And this happened all the time, really quite interesting.

0.35.43

JMW: So, I suppose he got a lot of news on his rounds as well.

RK: Yes, yes, he got...there was a lot of talk and very often you would maybe call...when we used to call at Parton we called at the Callander family in Parton and they were next door neighbours who would come in and this was the central point, was the Parton post office.

JMW: Right.

RK: And I've seen us arriving there at four o'clock and not getting to bed until about half past two in the morning because there were people from Drumrash would come in and from other areas. And we would maybe have, throughout the evening, we'd maybe have about twelve customers in, all wanting to buy.

JMW: It's a great way of doing business.

RK: Yes, yes, it was lovely, it was most entertaining. But you didn't have much time for anything else.

JMW: No.

RK: I can remember going away on the...doing the run myself down to Kirkcudbright and very, very late nights and you were really quite exhausted when you came back and you had no notion of going to a dance or entertainment when you came back home on the Saturday (laughs), it was off to bed. But it was a very interesting life and I thoroughly enjoyed it and you met so many people.

JMW: Yes, and was there a...when your grandfather started with the pony and trap, was there a company name on the trap, do you know?

RK: No, no, his...the name of his firm was D. M. Kinnear, David MacMonnies Kinnear.

JMW: Right.

RK: And then it carried on as D. M. Kinnear until my father came in and it was never actually called just John S Kinnear, it was John S Kinnear Ltd because our accountant, who was a good rugby friend of his, he decided that this was the way, this should go and make it into a limited company. So it was always D. M. Kinnear and then it was John S Kinnear Ltd after that.

0.37.57

JMW: In terms of...you obviously were a part of the business community so in Port William there must have been a lot more shops than we see now.

RK: Oh yes, yea. Going through the history of *Port William Remembered* with Dr Brown who has such a wonderful collection of old photographs, it was quite amazing the number of businesses, way over sixty, as many as, perhaps, nine or ten on the harbour alone, different grain business and coal businesses and drivers and carters, bus hire people but the number of shops in the streets...really quite incredible.

JMW: And the number of hotels and pubs, I suppose.

RK: Yea, well, in my time there was The Eagle Hotel, The Monreith Arms Hotel, The Commercial Hotel but before my time there was another pub in South Street and another one up in High Street here and then there was The George in Mochrum and then latterly in the '60s, late '50s, The Greenmantle Hotel, so there were quite a few licences, now we only have one.

JMW: Yea.

RK: Now, another very strange thing is that when the cars came to Port William originally the petrol was brought in gallon cans, two gallon cans, from Whauphill station and the ironmonger distributed them and then the ironmonger down Main Street, he had two petrol pumps, the ironmonger in The Square had two petrol pumps, we had two petrol pumps in South Street, at the garage there, there was a retail petrol pump at McLean's, the taxi hirers, and then Wylie's had their own private petrol pump on the harbour and The Monreith Arms had two petrol pumps. Now...we would be very lucky if we had about fifteen cars, we had this selection of petrol pumps, now there's only one petrol pump in the village and there are hundreds of cars. So, it's really quite strange and I find it quite strange that throughout the country, there are so many filling stations have closed but there are places polluted with cars so it must be a very specialised business now.

JMW: Do you remember the harbour being active in Port William, more active than it is now?

0.41.13

RK: Yes, well when I was a wee boy I can remember it being very active and there were...we used to get clam boats coming over from Portavogie, and to Garlieston as well, and maybe...difficult to say now but they were rafted together, sort of three and four deep, right up the harbour so there would be probably about nineteen or twenty of these clam boats in. We used to get, in the winter, or when the bay was open to seine netting boats and wee trawlers, under forty foot, they had to be thirty-nine foot nine, they came in and...they would come in and dock some of their fish there but they were always busy trawling up and down in the bay. I can't remember it actually very, very few boats actually bringing in...I can't really remember the schooners but I remember the one being broken up on the King's Green, *The Ellen and Mary*, but there was a lot of boats came in at one time, just before I would be born bringing in fertiliser and things for the land and taking bone meal and things away but it was still quite a busy fishing harbour, there was about one, two, three, four, five fishermen.

JMW: And did you sell anything in the shop relating to the fishing, the fishermen?

RK: Not a lot, odd waders but not...they tended to get them through a fishery supplier.

JMW: A chandler. And, presumably, in your grandfather's time or maybe in your father's time, the mill was working, was it?

RK: Oh yes, it was working in my time, even.

JMW: Was it?

RK: Yes, yes. Mr Jardine was the miller and he was always white, he was always covered in dust. But I can remember it working and the actual water wheel working as well and they had a lade burn that came down to the water-wheel and it went under the square, round by the keep-left sign and ran into the harbour (coughs) and in 1964 we formed a Harbour Association because it was falling to pieces and we raised a lot of money and we got a lot of local labour, a lot of unemployed labour, and the people were so impressed with these two chaps working that they supported us financially and we rebuilt the lade burn and put in a new sluice gate to allow the water to come through because the smell that you get in the harbour is where the seaweed in the storms come in and it tends to rot but you'll never get rid of it because there's fresh water springs, in the bottom of the harbour and the fresh water and the salt water and the seaweed have a chemical reaction which causes the smell.

JMW: Right.

0.44.36

RK: But it was then increased by silage effluent and pig slurry coming into the water course, very little of that now, but we carried on and it went right up until the SDA took over the harbour so it was a privately run, just by a committee run, association, The Harbour Association that kept the harbour going. It's now, the council has taken it over and it's made a wonderful job of it.

JMW: The mill was milling wheat or oats or-?

RK: Oats, oats mainly, and a lot of the farmers would bring in their grain and it would be treated by the mill, bruised or made into a meal for feeding and most of the...we called it, as young boys, corn, but it was actually oats, and very little barley or wheat that was grown then, much more barley now and of course it's a different type of straw and it's much, much better than the corn. Whereas the old oat straw was very good, still quite a good feeding, but it was used for, mainly for bedding. But the mill worked on for quite some time, it was Wylie's and then Dalgetty and then Monreith Estate, Dourie Farming Company bought it and they were storing their grain in it instead of in silos. They used to come and tip it in there.

JMW: And what they milled was largely for animal feed, was it?

RK: Yes, yes.

JMW: Not particularly for human consumption?

RK: No, no, no, no.

JMW: And just in the...from the local area and given back to the farmers?

RK: Yes. Well, I think you see, some of it was milled and made into...and used to make cattle cake which was then sold back to the farmer or the farmer could be credited with the grain that he got and then buy the cattle cake back for feeding the beasts in the winter.

JMW: Right.

RK: So, it would be an ingredient of the cattle cake. That was mainly, its main purpose I think.

JMW: And, presumably that business died as agriculture changed and they were using silage more.

RK: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

0.47.22

JMW: Right. And did you go to Port William School?

RK: Yes, I went to Port William School here and then went away to school in Edinburgh after I was eleven. But it was a grand wee school, Port William, I've very fond memories of it.

JMW: Yes.

RK: And of course we've all grown up, I've been here most of my life apart from being away training and then National Service. So I've lived in the village nearly all my life so we've known each other.

JMW: Yes. And did you always expect to be in your father's business, was that quite-?

RK: No, I was very lucky because I had two brothers before me and one wasn't interested in the...my sister, the eldest sister, she used to love working in the shop, she worked in the holidays but she was a PE teacher. And then my next brother, he went into my grandmother and grandfather's business in Inverness, who was a manufacturing jeweller, so he went to gemmology classes and became a jeweller and eventually finished up as manager of Hamilton and Inches in Edinburgh. And then the next brother, Billy, he was more interested in farming and engineering so he didn't come into the shop, he actually went off to Canada so I was lucky that I was able to step into the business, although I wasn't terribly keen to begin with. I'd thought about staying on at school but...and then realised that it was a shame to let this business go so once I got stuck into it I really found it very interesting and there was a lot of scope and a lot of ways of changing the business and improving it. So I was very fortunate, really, that I was the runt of the litter but managed to get the business (laughter).

JMW: And would your grandfather have described himself as a draper? Is that the correct term?

RK: Yes, that was...the draper. That would be his name then and I've always used it because it's much easier than being a shopkeeper, when you're busy writing things out, to put shopkeeper or company director or...I just put draper, it's much easier. But he was very much a draper and my father and myself because we were clothiers and outfitters and dressmakers, it was everything in the drapery trade and then into furniture and then I developed the carpet side of it where it was nearly seventy-five per cent carpet trade that we finished up with.

0.50.34

JMW: And was there a sort of formal apprenticeship that you had to go through when you joined the business?

RK: Well, my father had served, worked in a warehouse in Glasgow, the one that my grandfather had come from, and I was sent off to do the same thing with I & R Morley in London. And then I worked in their factories in Heanor in Derbyshire, various places, Nottingham, just learning how the various things were manufactured, how gloves were made and how many different parts there were in gloves. And then the seamless stockings, before they were always fully fashioned stockings, they had to be linked right up the back seam which was a very skilful job and young girls used to make a lot of money doing that and then they came along with the seamless stockings which...they actually had a metal form of a leg and this was knitted on a circular machine, this stocking and it was pulled over the shape of this leg, metal leg, and put under temperature and it shrunk to the shape of the leg so there was no need to fully fashion it. And then, they eventually they came to...they carried on to tights where the tights were linked actually to the legs. But I did that and then I came back to Glasgow and I worked in the carpet factory there for some time and learned the trade and learned how it was done and then I went to James Williamson's, in Lancaster, to learn how to properly fit linoleum and take templates, so I went through the linoleum trade as well. After the war, people had become dissatisfied with linoleum because it was always so badly laid so James Williamson, they combined with Nairn's of Kirkcaldy latterly, they ran courses at Lancaster with professional tutors, teaching you how to lay and it was not easy, it was just, it was before they had Stanley blades, you just had the big hook blade and you had to keep it very sharp and you had to be very careful that it didn't slip, but you eventually got to learn the trade. So these were all the things, I worked at Harris Lebus for a short time as well, the furniture factory in London, so I had quite a good grounding.

JMW: Yes, yes, it sounds like it.

RK: And came back with quite a few ideas on how these other businesses were run, how their invoices were handled and completely differently to what we had at home. I usually had to suggest it to my father often enough that he eventually thought it was his idea. You couldn't come in and state that 'We're going to do this'. You had to suggest it to him and eventually he thought that was a very good idea of his, to change the invoicing, to change this and change that. You had to do it very diplomatically.

0.54.19

JMW: You mentioned the accounting and how it went on a six-monthly and then a three-monthly basis.

RK: Yes.

JMW: In terms of the actual tills, do you remember how those worked in the early days?

RK: Yes, in the early days, when I was a wee boy, I can remember it was a wooden drawer, you pulled out the drawer and it rang a bell which would hit this wee bell that was fixed to the inside of it and then on the top there was a, like a great big till roll and you wrote in the amount that you had sold and then at the end of the day that was counted up with what was in there. Then we got an NCR big till where you wound the handle, it was all purely

mechanical, and it lasted until decimalisation and we used to have an NCR man came round once a year to clean it and oil it and service it and once we got the electronic till it was no problem at all, it never needed any....if it did go, well, it would either refuse or it was thrown out and you had to get another one. There was no servicing of these, although we did take it once or twice to Glasgow to get it sorted, a wee but sorted on it but no, I can remember the old drawer till, it was really quite fascinating. And I had one of them I had my own wee shop when I was a schoolboy, I had it upstairs, and I used to sell things to my granny and my aunties and people like that, playing shops, but I had this wee till where I had my pennies in it and I was very proud when I could pull it and the bell rang.

JMW: And did you keep ledgers, day-books, that kind of thing?

RK: Yes, yes.

JMW: Of every item that was sold?

RK: Yea, well not every item that was sold, every item that was on credit.

JMW: Of course.

RK: It was entered in the day-book and then if they came and paid it then it was marked out of the day-book, if it wasn't paid it was then posted to a ledger and the account went out at the end of the month because we could keep the shop accounts to one monthly but the ones in the country you couldn't because your man didn't get round except every three months. But latterly they were beginning to pay by the month or just send it, post it off, but they weren't very...they didn't have cheque books and things in those days, you had to go and collect the money actually, real money.

0.57.15

So it was only latterly that the...then we started losing quite a bit of trade because farmworkers were becoming much more affluent, especially dairymen, they all had cars of their own so they could drive away to Ayr and Dumfries and Ingleston Market and you did lose a lot of trade to that and a big bit, the unseen opposition was the catalogue trade because there was a big, big lot of Littlewoods catalogues and things went round and they were shown round the farms and things like that as well and it still, to this day, there's quite a stiff catalogue trade. But it's the...it would be the opposition of email now would be the hardest hitter as far as high street shops are concerned. But that was one opposition you couldn't really do much about, was the trade, but we used to keep our eye on the prices that were going and try and compete with it but the bread and butter trade...the catalogue's didn't have bib and brace overalls and feckets and working jumpers and ex-army clothes from Mallet Port and Dowd which were great things and we could buy them very cheaply, very good.

JMW: Yes, yes, I suppose there has been a big change in the fabrics that people...from your grandfather's time when I presume it was all natural?

RK: Yea, yea, well, I can remember when I came into the business first of all, in the '50s, the great new fabric was rayon and rayon dresses and rayon this and rayon that and stockings, ladies' stockings, were mainly lisle stockings and of course you had the nylons and silk stockings after the war but they brought out the crepe nylons which stretched to more or less any size and they were very popular and wore very well. And then Courtaulds brought out a lot of fabrics, Courtelle was a lovely fabric for knitwear and it's still to this day and it

was based on an acrylic fibre and Orlon was a fabric that I had worked with in I & R Morley's. Now, Orlon was just like string, it was knitted like string into a jumper and then it was put in a Hoffman press, under extreme steam and heat, and it shrank to a shape and fluffed up and became a beautiful soft...just like a cashmere type of cloth but in an imitation and it sold very, very well. But Courtelle followed on after it and then all the acrylic stuff we still have today. But there was a lot of Shetland wool, as well, in knitwear, it was quite coarse fabric but very warm. And then we had the oiled wool jumpers which yachtsmen and sailors, mainly Norwegian, Scandinavian, we used to buy in quite a lot of that. But then the curtain net that you had was all cotton net and then it became Terylene and nylon and of course there was a lot of oilskin fabric, we used to be...oil cloth, Maxproof, were the waterproof leggings and things and waterproof trousers and jackets.

1.01.48

And then they discovered that they could take this...a fine cloth, it could be a nylon or any other manmade cloth and laminate PVC, polyvinylchloride, on to it and that made a tremendously waterproof fabric. They had difficulties to begin with, with the flexibility of it, with bending and sitting on tractors and things, you would get some of them flaking but they improved it gradually and it's still to this day...they're very, very good waterproofs...with that PVC. And a lot of other fabrics but there are still a lot of traditional yarns that are used. We used to sell a lot of wool but wool became so expensive that we were much cheaper buying it.

JMW: Did you notice, in your time, that people became more interested in fashion as in perhaps at some points they were more happy to have something that was utilitarian?

RK: Yea, yea. Well, yes, definitely, because I can remember coming, as a young boy, and you just had navy overall trousers for working and you had...they weren't called 'jeans' then they were a sort of denim, there was a brown denim that joiners wore, bib and brace overalls, and then a denim trouser but an overall trouser and then the American and Canadian jeans arrived and it was quite simple because you just got your waist and you got your leg size and then jeans started to come with a tapered leg or a bootleg or a flared leg and then they were washed denim, then denim with holes in the knees. I used to think 'Gosh, it was wonderful when you just had overall trousers and jeans and there was a waist and a length of leg, you didn't bother about the width of the leg or...but people would be coming, they wanted drain-pipe ones, they wanted very tight ones then they wanted stretch ones that you had to pull over and it became crazy, the jean trade. And you had to stock so many different jeans it was quite...it was really quite...there's a wee thing on jeans...when we had our fire all our good Lee Cooper jeans were folded and they were near the bottom of the heat so they just got charred, they didn't burn, and they were very weak across the knees where they were folded and we were selling them off, they were thirteen, fourteen pound jeans, we were selling them for a pound and thirty shillings and a lady bought six pairs and took them up and of course they were smelling of the fire and were charred across the legs and she said 'I bought six pairs of jeans, washed them, hung them up and I now have six pair of shorts' (laughter). So we gave her some other legs which she could sew on and her husband did wear them for work. That was just a funny story, just how it happened to weaken them just at the join where the burn was.

1.05.58

JMW: And did you notice that people were more prepared to darn and mend and be seen with mended clothes and then latterly, perhaps, less so?

RK: Yes, in the '50s they brought out Pathfinder Socks, Blaxknit, in Ireland, they brought these socks out and they were more or less guaranteed not to hole, that was the start of them, they were indestructible. There was another sock HJ and they were a heavy gauge in stretch nylon so darning sort of went out of fashion but I can remember, as a young boy, a lady in Port William, Mrs Knox, she was a retired colonial and had returned to Port William as a widow and she loved knitting socks and she would knit three-quarter hose for us for school and then when they'd been darned two or three times, she would re-foot them, made a wonderful job, they were just like new, new socks again. And my wife has always been keen on darning, she used to darn her uncle's socks but socks just went out of the fashion...darning socks went out of fashion once the...and I must admit the very first recession that we experienced...national strikes and big strikes and things never seemed to alter, affect our wee shop in a village, but the first recession that came along really did effect it and people were certainly make-do and mending. And we were selling far more repair kits and patches and wee lengths of cloth that they could make a skirt and they were very much make-do and mend as they had been during the war. But we used to talk about Wellington socks and they were cotton and very, very poor quality wool and they had an oiliness, you could smell the oiliness off them and my father always used to call them 'snake's wool', it was just cheap stuff and they were one and eleven pence and there was a better quality, they were two and eleven pence but they were Wellington boot socks and they just kept them more or less in the boots and they would have their other socks on, they just pulled these on and then the Wellington on but the darning certainly did fall away after that.

JMW: Now, if our father was a businessman did he have a certain standing in the community? Did you feel that you were sort of quite a prosperous family, in good standing in Port William and Whithorn?

RK: Yea, well he had, no he had...his friends were the banker and the factor and the local farmers. He had quite a group of friends and in the...very often on a Saturday morning they used to meet in The Monreith Arms cocktail bar and have their coffee and sort out all the problems of the village. He was chairman of the sports committee and that's really quite something when you consider, a sports committee, that's the sports committee in 1953.

1.10.19

JMW: Oh, great.

RK: There's about nineteen people there. He was secretary of the curling club for twenty-five years, he was a leading light in the Masons, he was...he did a lot of work and was in the Community Association and the village improvements which started in the '20s, then Community Council and then it became Community Association and he was in that for years, as well. And I've sort of had to follow on in his footsteps as well and be on as many committees and things as possible. We had a very good Boys' Brigade Company, I ran it for twenty-five years here.

JMW: Right.

RK: And I started the Harbour Association and I started the PWIRSAC, the lifeboat, we started that in 1979, so everyone does their bit in the village, we all tend to-.

JMW: It does seem to be a village where there's a lot of voluntary activity.

RK: Yes, yes.

JMW: More so than other villages of the same size.

RK: Yea, that's true. Sometime I feel that some of the villages are too small and then if you've got a town like Stranraer that's a bit too big they leave it to the Council.

JMW: Yes.

RK: Newton Stewart has a very difficult time with the Galloway Pageant, they've got a very energetic nucleus of people but they don't really get the support that they should do and they get a lot of criticism. We get that here but we can sort them out, (laughter) we tell them off and on Thursday night we have our 'greetin meetin'. This is all the people that have been greeting about this and that and the next thing and what improvement we can bring so we improve each year and get slightly better. Having the marquee now is a tremendous help, it really...it has been quite centrepiece, although it's very expensive, but we seem to manage all right. We'll get the details of that. But, no, it is quite an energetic wee village but when you think of it sort of towards the end of the 19th century, there was about nine hundred people in Port William, there are now six hundred and probably three times the houses and accommodation.

1.13.09

So it's quite incredible, it was...Guy and I were going over some of the little houses where there was a family of seven or eight and there was only a room and a kitchen and one room upstairs. They must have had a hut in the garden where they...some of them slept, I'm sure, in the summer anyway.

JMW: You mentioned Sir Herbert Maxwell and his factor knowing your grandfather, did you come across the Maxwells much in the village?

RK: Yes, well, I would...I never knew Sir Herbert Maxwell but my elder sister Rosemary did, but I knew Sir Aymer Maxwell quite well and Gavin Maxwell and he came, we had a common love of cars so we used to talk about cars quite a bit. But Sir Michael, I know very well and done work with him, but it was Sir Aymer that I really knew as an adult but didn't know him personally so well as Michael. But no, Sir Herbert was a great celebrity in the village, I would say, he was so good at everything.

JMW: Yes.

RK: In his knowledge of botany and biology and painting, history, his knowledge of trees and botany, the books that he wrote...but the pictures that he has drawn and painted that are still in Monreith House are absolutely wonderful. Just a catalogue of plants and biology, they're wonderful.

JMW: Yes.

RK: He was a tremendous...and he had to be in on everything. He was the Lodge, Myrton Lodge...he was the...not president...of the golf club, and he started it. H. H. Walker, his factor, was the first captain and Sir Herbert...and the golf club started in 1905 but unknown to me when I was doing the history of it, Sir Herbert had a little golf course that he got his forester and gardener to lay out at St Medan.

JMW: Oh right.

RK: And there was one at Glasserton, at Physgill, and there was another wee one at The Isle of Whithorn. There was one at Lord Stair's and they would invite each other for a day's fishing or a day at the grouse or a day rough-shooting, a day's golf, a day's tennis and they all had tennis courts and golf courses and things.

1.16.45

So 'the county set' moved in that sort of circle, so it was wonderful. But you talk about...when I was a wee boy they used to talk about 'Oh the good old days, ah it was tremendous. Sir Herbert had the place looking immaculate and everyone was fully employed' but I said 'They weren't really the good old days because these workers were lying on earthen floors, racked with TB, a job getting a doctor or to a doctor at that time' so it was wonderful days for the county and even the farmers were struggling, the tenant farmers were struggling. But I didn't altogether agree that they were the good old days, they've had much better days since. Whether it has finished up for the better or not I don't know. But I think when McMillan said 'You've never had it so good' that was probably the time to reflect on it as being correct. But things have changed a lot since then.

JMW: I suppose in your father's time the Monreith Estate would be fully functioning, there would be house parties and that kind of thing?

RK: Yes, yes.

JMW: Would your business have noticed an economic impact of all those things happening there?

RK: To a certain extent, yes, because you had a lot of people employed in the house, in domestic service, and they would come and spend their money in the shop and of course they had to get their uniform, they had a uniform, and the proper pinafore, lace edged pinafores and things and then there were so many that was the sort of upstairs or the downstairs there were a lot of dishwashers, people preparing vegetables, out digging vegetables, the sort of lower strata of the staff but they were all in full employment and they were making money and they didn't have a house to have to spend money on, they were provided with a house, albeit not very good conditions. They would have a well or there would be water near at hand but they would have to cart it, there would be no running well and conditions were difficult, very difficult.

JMW: Do you remember when you were travelling for your firm, do you remember seeing conditions in the countryside that were quite poor in cottages and so on?

1.19.52

RK: No, not by the time I was out. There were some occasions where the dairyman's house was much better order than the farmer's house. And I know one house not far from here, near Whauphill, a farmer's house that didn't have running water but cottages got running water and central heating put into them and the poor wife of the farmer had to put up until they made enough money in a few years' time to get it in, running water into their own house. But the byres and everything they had to have running water and the dairyman had to have his running water and things but they're slightly remote, the farmhouse didn't have anything. So, there were great improvements and in the '50s, of course, they were putting electricity, installing electricity, in a lot of the small holdings, the government smallholdings

up at Dunraggit and round that area. They were all getting electricity in then and I can remember a lot of the Department of Agriculture houses, workers' houses, cottages that were built...you couldn't get wood at the end of the war, so the skirtings were formed with cement, it was a resin floor and then there was a (former?) made and the skirting boards were cast round that so when you were laying linoleum it was shaped like that so you had lovely surface to draw a straight line along, you didn't have anything to fit to. It could slide up and down. But that was one thing I noticed, that all these modern bungalows that were built by the smallholding government department, very few of them had wooden skirting boards and nearly all sort of concrete floors or composition floors. Obviously they had wood in the timbers, metal windows, there were no...wood was very, very short at the end of the war.

JMW: Right.

RK: And during the war.

JMW: And I suppose your furniture business in a way developed as people had a bit more disposable income to spend.

RK: That's right, yes. Where they'd had an old kitchen press they would get rid of the old dresser and they would get a kitchen cabinet...you could get individual...you didn't have to have a fitted kitchen and the most popular thing was an easy-work unit which was two cupboards in the bottom, a drawer going right across, a big flap that folded down with an armoured glass plate for baking on, could stand heat, and then above that two cupboard doors with three shelves. And everyone...Harris Lebus used to make an excellent one and we sold hundreds of them and that was the modernisation of the kitchen. You'd maybe have three different units plus a big easy-work and just a table, table and chairs, a trolley perhaps, but that was an up-to-date kitchen in those days.

1.23.44

JMW: Yes, yes. And there would be a change from the old dressers that people were getting rid of, presumably wood to melamine or something like that?

RK: Yea, that didn't come out until quite late on...Formica...the person that...he used to do...was Jimmy Little the plumber in Whithorn, was very, very good at sticking Formica onto tops and he did this and lots of draining boards and old draw-leaf tables and drop-leaf tables, he would actually coat them with Formica, this was before it was really starting to come in units. But that would be about late '50s, early '60s, yea. But I think it gradually just came on from, they did the wee units with a sort of melamine or Formica top and then they made solid kitchen tops and units and fitted kitchens but they didn't come until...we stocked them in the '70s, we had a permanent kitchen display, in the early '70s, and we did a lot with Hygena and they were very, very good quality.

JMW: And during the war, I suppose two questions, one is: did you have to sell a lot of blackout material?

RK: Yes, well, there was...we kept rolls of blackout material and joiners made frames and then they were stuck on with drawing pins. But during the war, of course, it was all clothing coupons-

JMW: Indeed.

RK: -and it was very difficult to get any coupon-free stuff at all so my father started selling anything that they could manage to sell and he had distemper; wallpaper which we sold up until the '80s, we had wallpaper books that we sent round customers or people would come into select their wallpaper; bicycle tyres; wee battery lamps and it was terrible because there was two ironmongers as well, they were selling the same sort of thing, but my father didn't have any stuff to display really in the window. No sort of new dresses in or new cloth or things like, that it was just essentials that you bought with your coupons. He had two boxes, he was very keen on his tomatoes, growing his tomatoes in the greenhouse at home, but he wanted to grow some more so the siting of our shop faces south so we had...very bad for drapery, you had to have blinds over the windows, but he put two big long boxes in the windows, one on each window, with tomato plants in it, and of course the tomatoes grew and he had canes in and they were growing right up the top of the window because they were very high windows and my mother heard two Women's Royal Army Corps arguing outside.

1.27.53

She said 'It's not a greengrocer's' she said 'I've had needles and pins and knitting pins out of there. It is a drapers, go in.' (Laughter). She couldn't see into the shop for the tomato plants that were growing up and filling the windows. But that was where...during the war where they wanted you to cultivate on every possible bit of land you could and they actually cultivated the roadsides...grew things on the roadsides. And when they were planting corn, oats and things like that, they...it was right up to the wall and all the fields had to be opened by scythe to let the binders in, there was no space for them at all. These are just some of the things but we had a very easy war here, in Port William, because there was plenty of eggs and ham and freshly made butter and milk and cream, all the farms had it for sale.

JMW: Yes, yes. And did your father join the Home Guard?

RK: No, he was...he had a very bad car accident in 1941/42 where he broke his leg very badly but he wanted to join the Air Sea Rescue but they would never...they wouldn't pass him from his medical point of view but he was the Civil Defence Chief Warden for the area, for the whole of the Machars and he did all that sort of thing. But he enjoyed it, again the camaraderie, again, I think, the team effort as well, everyone was in it, and they were all in it together, sort of style.

JMW: Yes.

RK: So he and Guy Brown's father were out quite often when there were any bombs or things that dropped, landmines and things. Guy was very funny saying 'They never knew which steel helmet to wear, whether they should have the medical one or whether they should have the Civil Defence one on, so they just went with their bunnets and put the helmets in the car.

JMW: And in Whithorn, do you remember some of the other famous businesses like Drapes, you remember that flourishing?

RK: Yes, yes, yea. J. B. Little, the plumbers, and Doughtie's the game dealer and fishmonger, and Eddie Little's, the ironmongers, but I think that was after the war it started up. Yes it was it was...well there were people before that and I can't remember the name now. Aye, Eddie Little took over the...he worked at Cairnryan, I can't remember the name of

the ...that was the top ironmongers, on the opposite side just below the post office or just above the post office, one of these shops.

1.31.24

They had petrol pumps outside on the street. And of course I remember Drapes very well and Denton, the bakery, where the radio shop was, and I didn't really know, I wouldn't...just travelling through the area as a wee boy really, before the war with my...well, before the end of the war, with my father.

JMW: Would you remember farms still using horse-drawn equipment?

RK: Oh yes, yea, yea. In fact we used to work with the Kays, they had a dairy farm and...to lead in the horses from the harvest field, it was always called 'the leading in' and so you got a job as a wee boy just leading the horse in, it saved the men, they could start and get their stooks and things brought down and loaded onto another cart. So we used to do that and at The Clone, we used to get an endless job of picking stones in a very stony field which was beach at one time and this old horse was trained so well it just walked along at a very slow speed, just two or three steps and it would stop and two or three more steps and you had to load in all the stones, into the back of the cart, and you'd go to the other end and turn and come back down and you had maybe a whole cart full of stones and you couldn't see where you had picked them, you couldn't see any difference between the bit that had been picked to the that bit you were about to pick. But it was a soul destroying job, but they were very well trained old horse that went along and then you led them in and they tipped them up and you'll see them in quite a lot of fields up by Elrig, great mounds of stone, where they've been lifted off the field and just dumped. But no, there was a lot of horses and then the coalman in Port William was Phillip McKenzie and he worked for Wylie's and kept...they had two horses down the harbour, the back of the store, and they had their coal store there so he used to take a slip doormat from my mother's front hall and put it in the front of the cart and I would sit there so that I didn't get my backside all covered in coal dust and I'd go round with...delivering his coal. And then another funny delivery we had was the baker, Jimmy Little, in Port William. Emily Kevin rode this tricycle which was a big box on the front and the lid, she lifted it up and inside were lovely cream cookies and iced cakes and things so she did her bakery round and I used to go along with her sitting on the top of this as well, getting the odd wee bun that went the wrong way (laughter). But, no, I can remember all the ploughing and then of course we had big foal shows and-

1.34.54

JMW: I've heard of that.

RK: -and Clydesdale shows and then you would have a stallion show in the square where you'd maybe get as many...I can remember as many as fourteen or fifteen stallions all beautifully groomed and tied up with tassels and bunches and their coat groomed to perfection, their feet all oiled, the hooves oiled and the feathering, the hair round the feet, all done with a talcum powder to make them look absolutely superb and they were brought into the square and all the farmers came down to see which stallion they would get to serve their mares because they would get a foal every year.

JMW: You're right.

RK: And this is what they always said when the tractors came in 'You cannae get a wee foal out o a tractor every year' (laughter), because you couldn't get a new tractor every year.

But it was very...I can remember coming down after school one day and standing in the square and watching all these stallions there.

JMW: It seemed to be only Port William that had those horse shows, am I right?

RK: No, no, I would think there would be quite a few around. I can remember going to gymkhanas and things where they had the mounted sports after the shows, similar to Wigtown Show. At Stoneykirk they always had gymkhanas, there were some in Glenluce, Barnbarroch, I think at Wigtown, apart from Wigtown Show, I think they had...yes.

JMW: I see, yes.

RK: But I don't know if where the...they must have had other stallion shows because these stallions would...were nearly all led by a halter, they would walk from farm to farm and they would stay on the farm, they would get their accommodation until they had served the mare and then they would go on, on to the next farm or where the stud farm, wherever it was. But I can remember that and I can remember the foal shows and the...just the wee sort of gymkhanas and things that we had, sometimes in the Maxwell Park and sometimes in the field below the Dourie Farm, seeing them there and sometimes big gallops, they were very fast horses, Parkers from Auchenhay used to come and ride...they always had a very good family of horses, and oh, they were great outing days and they brought a lot of people in.

JMW: Yes.

1.38.05

RK: When I was in the shop, on a Saturday we went home for our evening meal at five o'clock and came back to the shop at six o'clock, and Robert McNally he went off for his tea at four o'clock and came back at five o'clock, and the girls, they just finished at six and then we had all the picture buses coming. You had a bus coming in from Elrig, which it didn't come down till seven o'clock, and then there was Crawford's bus would come from the Whauphill area into Port William and they would all come into the shop and buy things and do a lot of their grocery from the Dewar's, these shops were all open until seven-thirty at night and the last bus was in from Elrig at half past seven, there was one at seven and it went on to the pictures in Whithorn. And then there was another bus went to the pictures in Wigtown and then the big bus went to Newton Stewart for the pictures there so there were picture shows in the Kingsway cinema, the Wigtown cinema, Whithorn cinema and then we had a travelling cinema that came round the halls during the week from Byron Chamberlain's father, he had the...was it...his was the Kingsway, can't remember the one of...the Wrecks, I think it was in Wigtown, 'the bug hut' they called it (laughter). But Saturday was a very busy night.

JMW: That's amazing.

RK: And we...the shop opened in those days at nine o'clock in the morning and you went right through till half past seven at night and that was when you wrote all the postcards out, sent them off to Glasgow and you got a reply the next morning from them so quickly, wonderful service.

JMW: Was the fact that the horses were still in use, did that have any effect on stock that you had to keep, did you keep items of clothing to do with-?

RK: No, they weren't really breeches and things, I can remember J.B. Hoyle from Hebden Bridge, they made (Armoclad?) working trousers, very, very strong, you could actually get a suit made from them, they had waistcoats, jackets and trousers, but they also did britches and we'd only sell maybe a pair a year or a couple of pairs a year or just a special order for them but they were the great...they jodhpurs the great big ones and very heavy here for the leathers of the saddle not digging into your leg. But that was mainly just used by the...as walking gear for the stallion leaders, but they usually would buy (Armoclad?) clothing, trousers, they were a wonderful thing, they wore and wore and wore, they used to fade before they would wear out, they never wore out on the knees or anywhere at all and of course you could see someone who'd had a pair of (Armoclad?) trousers for a long time because they could have stood up on their own, the big bulges on the knees but they never, ever went through, they didn't hole.

1.42.00

JMW: And Port William had its own creamery?

RK: Yes, yes, that would be in the '20s, in think, it would start then. It had a creamery and all the milk was collected by lorries, in butts, the big five...ten gallon, they would be, and these were carted up to the end of the road or to a platform, a loading platform by the farmer and then the lorry would pick them up, morning and night.

JMW: And was Port William making, were they processing liquid milk or was it cheese or-?

RK: It was cheese, cheese, yea, it was all cheese they made and the curds, the dried curds, the kids used to go out and eat it, you got handfuls of it, they were just a waste, they fed some to pigs and things but it was the dried curds that they...they were very hard and crunchy. There was quite a lot of people employed in the creamery as well.

JMW: Did you keep any coats for creamery workers or-?

RK: No, they were all supplied by the Milk Marketing Board, they did all their own stuff. Can't think of anything else of the...there was always the effluent that came out from the creamery, it ran out down a burn onto the beach and the fresh water and the sea water and the seaweed, you got an even worse smell at the creamery, at The Gables, than you did in the harbour in Port William. But you live here, you never notice it, one of these things.

JMW: Yes.

RK: But you always noticed the smell going out past the creamery or The Gables, that was the house beyond it, because it was always so strong, it would infiltrate the car, you could smell it.

JMW: Was it quite late when there was some pig framing in Port William, was it the Dourie that did pig faming?

RK: Yes, yes and they just stopped last October.

JMW: Goodness.

1.44.26

RK: Yea, yea, when we started the Harbour Association in Port William a song was made up and it was: (sings)

‘Our toon was always tidy,
Our streets were never stoory
But we were left wi twa big stinks,
The harbour and the Dourie’

(Laughter) So we tried to sort the smell in the...ah, but we couldn’t do much about the one from the Dourie. But that was, they did their best, the slurry was sprayed out on the ground and it could only absorb so much and then of course it would run off with the rain and into the burn here which used to be a lovely fishing burn and a nice big dam with water for the mill and it all silted up, until there was just mainly sort of slurry and effluent from the silage pits and killed all the fish off, which was very sad. But that has all stopped now because they don’t have any pigs there, and they’re building big slurry lagoons for the cattle at Dourie, they’ve taken all the piggery down, all the breeze block, broken it all up into various grades of gravel and stone and they’re using that for building another piggery at the old creamery at (Airriequhillar?) and it will be, obviously, some way of getting rid of the slurry from it, I don’t know what it’s going to be and...everyone was paid off last October, the pigs...the bottom fell out of the pig market, there was no money, they were losing money every week and having to pay staff as well, but they were actually losing money from between the feeding stuffs and the sale price because they were importing pork from the continent, cheaper prices, so that has gone but they’re intensifying the milk production now.

JMW: Right, and was the pig business, was that quite long-lived, did that start before the war or-?

RK: No, no, no, no. It was just a general farm estate, when Mr Christie took it over at first. Piggeries, pigs would maybe start in...I’m really not certain, you’d have to ask but I would think it would be somewhere in the mid-60s and then they were breeding their own and they were producing for...to supply other people with and they were very, very good and they were very well known, they had a big contract with Walls’, they supplied Walls’ for years with sausages but that has sort of packed up. Just trying to think, it would be about, it could be the late ‘50s and then they’ve always tried to keep on top of things, broilers, they did very well with them for a while but then it dropped away, the bottom fell out of the price. So they’re trying again with a big grant to do this new piggery.

1.48.15

JMW: And judging by old postcards that I sometimes collect Port William had quite a holiday trade at one time.

RK: Yes, yes. The Monreith Arms here was a mecca for good food and good holidays. John Gillies must have come in before the Second World War, in the ‘30s, he was a wonderful chef and trained a very, very good cook in Port William, Agnes Murray, and the food they turned out was absolutely beyond belief and they carried on right through the war. How they managed to do it, I don’t know, but people would come from miles around, especially on a Sunday for their afternoon tea, which cost two and sixpence, twelve and a half pence, and you could have as much to eat as you wanted and Agnes Murray and...there was another three cooks in there, and bakers, turned out every type of baking, pancakes, soda scones, tattie scones, fruit scones, cheese scones, beautiful sponge cakes, just a tremendous selection, and people would come from miles around, they didn’t need to go home for their

tea, they just came for, instead of having lunch they came and had afternoon tea and that did them for their evening meal as well. They then developed the hotel, had a very good restaurant trade because they had to make a separate restaurant because they were so full of people in the hotel, all the year round, all the better quality representatives from bigger firms, they always stayed there during the week and then they had usually functions on throughout the winter, at the weekends, but the summer, if you came and had your fortnight in July, before you left at the end of it you had to book for next year because it would be booked up and you had the regular, same people coming every year to the Monreith Arms and it was...had rosettes, several awards for good food. They had lobster on the menu every day for lunch and dinner, they did the most wonderful hors d'oeuvres that was ever served. It was a trolley that came round and just a mass of various things and hors d'oeuvres, it's something you don't see now, it's antipasto, it was a beautiful dish, and they always had a clear soup, consommé and they always had a vegetable soup or a cream soup. And we had one waitress, she was lovely, she would come to take your order and she... 'Are you wantin soup? Do you want thick or thin?' (laughter), [?] Sarah, she was always a great...but they always had a great staff and then they built the new part on and the Jardines carried it on, they carried on the thing for quite some time.

Telephone rings.

1.52.04

So, it was a wonderful hotel and The Eagle Hotel had all the other reps from smaller firms or ones who couldn't afford maybe just as much as The Monreith Arms, it was a very, very good commercial traveller hotel and dozens of people went there for their mid-day meals, if they were working in the area at all, if they were calling through, any council workers or inspectors or...always went into The Eagle and had their lunch, and it was excellent food as well, not as high class a menu as The Monreith Arms, but a very, very good wholesome food. And, as Guy said, at one time it had on his...not his menu, his brochure, an old, old brochure, and he said 'We have hot water, cold water and salt water, all on tap', that was in The Eagle. But yes, and it brought a big, big lot of trade into the area because we used to buy, in the shop, the total output of Donbros knitwear, of all the garments that they had left, the remnants of their range, because they had changed their range every year, so we would buy up all the items that were left over from...various colours, sometimes a lot of big sizes and wee sizes, but we always had this Donbros knitwear sale for the whole summer and people used to come and buy their Christmas presents at our sale because the knitwear was so good. Unfortunately Donbros was taken over by another firm and we never got the chance of it again but we used to buy a lot of samples, travellers' samples, which were...you didn't get the range of sizes, they were all nearly always medium or small and you got them at a very cheap price, they were sold at the manufacturer's price, the maker's price and we got a good profit off it as well, a discount, and everyone got a bargain so that was really quite good.

JMW: Port William's retained a holiday trade, unlike some other places which have lost it.

RK: Yes. Well, we haven't retained the same sort of trade-

JMW: No.

RK: -we've a lot of letting houses now that let out for the summer. And of course the caravans, that brings...although this is probably been the worst year for caravan trade-

JMW: Yes.

RK: -because it's costing so much to travel, you're talking about a hundred pounds in petrol, if you're coming up from the south of England. I know the people come over from Newcastle, we get a lot of them, they're talking about...it's a lot of money, fifty pounds each way, where it's...before it was no problem at all.

1.55.24

JMW: Yes, yes. I suppose, looking at the future, do you feel quite optimistic about the future of Port William, having seen it for so many years? Or do you think we're facing a great period of change?

RK: It's going through a great period of change, I must admit. We have a much better standard of housing now than we ever had, as I pointed out to you about the population. Now, very difficult to know...sometimes you get people who open up a new shop and they're very successful and it gets going well and for some reason or other, family bereavement, they've got to give it up and it just discontinues and we have two grocer's shops, well, one doesn't do such a big trade as the other, but when you think back to even in my day, we had two ironmongers, we had three drapers, two tailors, one, two, three, four grocers, a dairy, three pubs...you just wonder what the people do now. But shopping is so different now, a much better bus service, they can go away to the towns and shop in supermarkets. Every wee grocer that was in here had a grocer's van and they went round and they delivered or they actually called and sold from the shop. But it's quite surprising that...when I think, we had a milliner and dressmaker and then we had another wee boutique as well, all when I was in business.

JMW: Yes.

RK: And it was quite funny, when we had opposition to our drapery shop, we had Brown and Company opposite us and then it was Henderson's, at Christmas time you could see your figures each year sort of rising and then the shop opposite us closed and you could see your figures next Christmas going down, because they would say 'Oh, we'll need to get such and such a present, we'll go in and if they haven't got it in Kinnear's we'll get it in Brown's' or vice versa. And then latterly when there was no Brown's they just 'Och, we'll not bother going down to Port William because if Kinnear's haven't got it we'll have to go to Newton Stewart anyway so we'll just go to Newton Stewart.' And it was funny how opposition builds trade, and it was really quite an eye-opener for myself to see trade go down but then we diversified and built the trade up in different ways with carpets, and as the furniture trade died off where you had B & Q and MFI and other people, multiples, selling furniture, we just toned down the furniture side, made it a smaller showroom and increased the carpet stock and we were fitting a lot of carpets, it was very, it was sort of three men, three men and one in Whithorn, full time, carpet fitting nearly all the time. So it certainly was quite a worthwhile diversification but very funny how, coming from manufacturing tailoring to fitting carpets, in a hundred years, just in three generations.

1.59.46

JMW: Yes, yes. And at least the name survives.

RK: Yes, well, yes, the carpet fitter who started, it was a great success story, I feel, he started as a Youth Opportunity on a government scheme as a boy, was learning...he was keen to work, he had been on other schemes before, painting and various things, that had never come to anything but he stuck at this and he did very well and we would have a wee bit bother with him as well but we knocked him into shape and he realised what was...the future would be. He never thought for one minute that he would actually be owning the business, but I was so delighted that...people had been so faithful to us and buying from us always, that I felt retiring I was leaving them in the lurch if I didn't have at least one carpet fitter to be able to go and look after the carpets we had supplied and when he said he would do it, I was delighted. And he's done exceptionally well, he has...doing well and it's quite nice to still see the name in the village.

JMW: See the name, yes, absolutely.

RK: And that was one of the things that he said that he would want. In hindsight I should have charged him much more (laughter) but no, I was so pleased that he was going to carry on and keep the business going, I was delighted. It was good.

JMW: Well, do you feel there's anything we haven't covered, we've covered a huge variety and I-

RK: Well, you haven't had a cup of tea or coffee, yet (laughter).

JMW: No thank you, I like to focus. Is there anything you feel you want to say that I haven't asked you?

RK: I don't think so, no I think we've covered it fairly well. I had a lovely picture of Billy, the pony, and trap that they travelled in, outside the shed at the back of the shop, the old shop, which I still use, it was a corrugated shed, and my father is sitting with the reins and his younger brother is holding the bridle and his sister, May, standing by the cart and I thought it was a lovely photograph and that is the pony and trap that he used to go down to the golf on a Sunday, it was always a race from church to get to the golf to try and get your pony into the stable, there was only enough stabling for two, and they used to race from the church all the way to the golf course and have a big picnic there instead of lunch and then they would play golf afterwards but Billy, the pony, got in the stable if he managed to win the race (laughter).

JMW: Well, that's tremendous, if you feel that we've covered everything you'd like.

RK: I think we have pretty well, yes.

JMW: Right.

RK: I'll probably remember something tonight but-

JMW: Oh, no doubt and I'll remember what I should have asked but that's tremendous.

RK: No, I think you've asked some very pertinent questions, ones that carried us the right way. So thank you very much.

JMW: Thank you very much.