

Interviewee: Judy Brown (JB)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
Date of Interview: 6 September 2012	Ref: DG4-13-1-1-T

JMW: So, do you want to start by telling me a little about your family and how you came to be in the area?

JB: I think we've always been in the area. Certainly in this part since the 1850s.

JMW: Goodness, right.

JB: Because my grandfather had the Zorach Farm

JMW: Right, ok.

JB: And then he had Outreach Farm so-

JMW: That's a long time.

JB: -we've been in this little bit.

JMW: Did he come from elsewhere?

JB: No, he was born at the Zorach too, so it goes back.

JMW: So, you don't know.

JB: I haven't gone into the ancestry yet.

JMW: No, that's fine. And so did he own those two farms-

JB: Yes.

JMW: -or was he a tenant?

JMW: He owned them. Ok.

JB: And, of course, my father inherited them as the only boy, with four sisters.

JMW: Right, right.

JB: And then when my father retired, because he had no sons, so he sold the farms and kept forty acres and built this house.

JMW: Right, right.

JB: In, 1965, '66.

JMW: And you grew up on those farms?

**0.01.35**

JB: Yes, I was born on Outreach.

JMW: Right.

JB: Yes, and I grew up there until I went away to boarding school (laughs).

JMW: And do you remember how the farm operated and what kind of crops and so on?

JB: Oh, yes. We had both beef and sheep and arable because there was six hundred and forty acres, approximately, and three hundred was arable and the rest for rough, or grazing. So we had that, then just after the war we started the dairy and in 1947 the dairyman and his wife were milking sixty-three cows, night and morning, and looking after all the young stock for a wage of seven pounds a week (laughs) plus they got free milk and free coal and that sort of thing, but seven pounds a week that was a big... and my father started growing early potatoes in 1938 and he was first into the Glasgow market with them, then.

JMW: Right, so these were on coastal fields or-?

JB: Yes, yes, they were on the coastal fields.

JMW: And was that a good soil for them?

JB: Good soil round there.

JMW: Right, ok.

JB: But you were only allowed to grow a tenth of your arable acreage as potatoes.

JMW: I see, right.

JB: So he grew thirty acres of potatoes.

JMW: That was the Ministry of Agriculture, was it?

JB: Mm.

JMW: Even in those day?

JB: Even in those days, even in the war.

JMW: Right, right. And so was he unusual in growing potatoes round here?

JB: Yes, he was the first one in this area, they were all grown up Girvan shore then before that and we were the first down here and Claymoddie and Kids dale grew them too.

### **0.03.46**

JMW: Both coastal farms. Right. And that means it's sandy or light soil does it?

JB: No, it wasn't, it fairly well manure, shall we say. Not sandy, not like further up the coast. It was proper soil but not clay, there's a bit clay here but it wasn't so clay around there-.

JMW: So, when he started, what kind of machinery was used, if any, to plant and harvest potatoes?

JB: (Laughs) they were planted by women.

JMW: Uhuh, planted, right.

JB: They took the horse and machine along to make the drills and then the women carried a box between them and they did two drills, one each, as they went along planting and when they were ready we got a potato squad over from Ireland with all his workers and they dug them and lifted them.

JMW: Right. So were the women who planted, were they local?

JB: Yes.

JMW: Largely Isle of Whithorn and Whithorn or-?

JB: Largely Isle of Whithorn but other people who worked on the farms, lived on the farms.

JMW: Right.

JB: Because there were ten men on Cutreoch and the Morrach at that time because it was horses and...tractors had not long started and it was much more manual labour than it is now, so you had all the families and the kids would come out as well.

JMW: Yes. Now, I've heard about 'the tattie holidays' is that for lifting?

JB: Yes, that's for lifting the late potatoes in October.

JMW: Ok.

JB: It's now called 'the October school holiday' I think. But we had to work (laughs), in that day we had the holidays to lift the potatoes.

JMW: Yes, yes.

#### **0.06.04**

JB: And most of us had to do that.

JMW: That included you?

JB: Yes, indeed (laughs). Why keep a dog and bark yourself (laughs).

JMW: Hush, hush, and schoolmates of yours at the time or-?

JB: Well, I went to The Isle School.

JMW: Yes.

JB: For the first few years, so we just walked down the road and walked back up. In fact we marched back up the road behind the troops.

JMW: Right.

JB: (Laughs) because the NAAFI was on the end of the harbour.

JMW: I've heard of that, yes.

JB: And they seemed to, the NAAFI seemed to shut about the same time as the school came out so when they marched past the entrance to the school, we joined on the back to march up the road and as each farm came and the cottages, the kids dropped off (laughs) because it was a big displaced persons camp up at Burrow Head.

JMW: Right, ok, as well as the target practice?

JB: Yes, that was after the target practice, we had a lot of Poles and things up there. Some of the children came to the village school for a while.

JMW: Yes, right. So, reverting to the potatoes, because we can go back to the war experience because that's interesting, how did your father have the idea of getting Irish squads in?

JB: I suppose it would be his potato merchant in Glasgow that would recommend, there were certain squads that came over to certain farms every year and once we had them it was the same ones that came every year, to us, and then they moved onto wherever was next.

JMW: And were the Irish people just quicker at it or were they cheaper or-?

**0.08.07**

JB: No, I don't think there was anything like that but they were Catholics and they were controlled by 'You will be at Chapel on a Sunday morning' and 'you will be...' so I suppose they were more regimented.

JMW: More disciplined.

JB: More disciplined.

JMW: Right.

JB: And they slept on potato boxes with straw on top, for the duration, and they lived on potatoes.

JMW: Right. And this was in a barn or something?

JB: Mm, just in one of the sheds.

JMW: Yes. And do you remember seeing inside, do you remember seeing that being prepared for them when they were coming or-?

JB: No, well I can't remember what was prepared other than these boxes, potato boxes, they were just wooden boxes and they put straw on top of them and...I was young then and we were just...we ran in to see how they were cooking the potatoes and this sort of thing.

JMW: It seems quite a monotonous diet, did they have it for all three meals of the day?

JB: I think so, I think so. Never seemed to see them at...they were never off the place except to go to Chapel on a Sunday.

JMW: Right, so they'd go into Whithorn, presumably?

JB: Mm.

JMW: And walk?

JB: No, no, my father got a tractor and a trailer and took...got one of the men to drive it in, so they had no excuse that the... (Laughs).

JMW: And do you know which part of Ireland they came from?

JB: South. But which, how far over, I'm not sure, I was too young.

JMW: Right, right. So, once they'd got the potatoes up what happened then?

**0.10.15**

JB: Well, they bagged them and they were stacked outside the field, on the roadside, and then the potato merchant sent his lorry down to get whatever and from the next place,

whatever amount they wanted that day, because he sold them daily at the price they were that day so you wanted to always get the best price and, of course, first in the market got the best price.

JMW: Right, right.

JB: So, the earlier in the season that you could grow them, the better.

JMW: And were they the same varieties as you see around now or was it a-?

JB: No, yes, the old varieties are still around but there are so many new ones now that are completely foreign to me (laughs).

JMW: Yes, I know the Girvan ones are always a particular variety aren't they?

JB: I think they're Kerr's, are they Kerr's Pinks? Or, oh I can't remember really, I really can't.

JMW: So, as regards the rest of the farm staff, did they have cottages that they lived in?

JB: Yes.

JMW: On the farm itself?

JB: Yes. They're all now holiday homes.

JMW: Right, that's the change isn't it? You must have found the countryside was very busy with people.

JB: Oh yes, there was over fifty of us in The Isle School.

JMW: Right, yes, and do you remember seeing inside the cottages when you were a child?

JB: Oh, yes, we were in and out because our friends were the cottage kids.

JMW: Yes.

JB: You weren't going running round in cars and things then, you walked and with the war and the end of the war there wasn't petrol, there wasn't the transport that we've got now.

JMW: Yes.

### **0.12.30**

JB: The farmer had a phone and the farmer had one car or one vehicle and the workers had nothing. They walked and we just walked and we played there. Because there was one bus went up the road past Cutreoch once a week, which was known as 'the picture bus' on a Saturday night (laughs).

JMW: Right, yes. And do you remember how the cottages were laid out inside? Did you see box beds and earthen floors or was it more civilised?

JB: Oh, it was much more civilised than that. They still had the, what you would call a box bed, I suppose, in a recess sort of, in the wall. That was usually the parents' bed and the other children or the children slept where...in whatever room they could, depending on the size of the family.

JMW: Yes.

JB: Because there was probably just two bedrooms and the kitchen cum sitting room cum dining room, the whole lot. And the days were long for them and they all kept their own gardens after they went home at night because they...for food.

JMW: Yes, yes, and quite large families?

JB: Yes, well the Jardine family were the ones, you probably know half of them. I think there were seven of them and that was the biggest one that I remember. When I was smaller there were bigger ones but I didn't know them, well I didn't, I was too young. And of course when the war started...oh, it's getting a bit of a tip coming in the bay there, oh.

JMW: You get a good view of the harbour.

JB: Oh yes. What is it I was going to say?

JMW: We were talking about large families, I think.

JB: But then they got smaller after that because things started moving and everybody started moving away because farmers got more mechanised, so the labour left, and now there's only one or two.

JMW: Yes.

JB: And they don't, most of them don't live on the farms.

JMW: No, no, that's right.

#### **0.15.26**

JB: Did you find that the families who worked for your father, did they stay a long time, were they-?

JB: Yes, most of them did.

JMW: Right.

JB: Most. Because the Jar dines were with us for many years and they all started working with us in one capacity or another.

JMW: So you remember the farm when there was quite extensive use of horses?

JB: Yes.

JMW: That would-.

JB: We had four, four Clydesdales that I remember.

JMW: Right, lovely. Well perhaps it was a lot of work.

JB: Well, it wasn't for us, it was a lot for the men, yes, because that was the first thing they had to do every day was feed and groom the horses before they went out at...to work.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: And starting time was seven o'clock, as far as I can remember, except for the dairyman after the war when...he made his own hours, I think, initially.

JMW: So, there were presumably stables as part of a courtyard or-?

JB: No, it was just...yes, there were the stables, and there were four of five stalls in it, just the one door out, there wasn't, it wasn't like a horse stud where you see that the buildings all the way round but buildings round but not for horses.

JMW: Not by stables, yes.

JB: They were for strong turnips, for the dairy, for the...doing the sterilising of all the dairy dishes and milk butts and things, then.

JMW: So, the dairying was after the war, did you say?

JB: Yes, yes.

JMW: So, by then there'd be some regulation of milk and quality and hygiene and so on?

**0.17.40**

JB: That I don't remember other than we were Tuberculin Tested and, yes, the milk tester came and did, and I can't remember how many thousands of bugs you were allowed before-

JMW: And so, your milk was picked up, was it?

JB: Yes, the milk lorry came and collected the ten gallon milk butts and took them into Whit horn creamery.

JMW: Right.

JB: That's where they went.

JMW: And was that for liquid milk or for cheese or butter or-?

JB: Where it went after Whithorn, I wouldn't know. Probably Sorbie would get some of it for the cheese-making there, and some of it would go away on the train.

JMW: Yes, so when you started, milking was already somewhat automated, was it?

JB: Yes, they had the old fashioned milking machines.

JMW: The old machines, hush. Was that the individual one that you moved from cow to cow?

JB: Mm.

JMW: Yes, and was it women who did the milking or men?

JB: Mostly the men by then. When it was hand milking, before, in earlier days, it was usually the women that hand milked.

JMW: Yes, yes. And did you feed any of the staff of the farm in the farm kitchen?

JB: No, not....well we fed, yes, we fed one chap, he was a German Pole, and he lived in half of the Morrach house and we gave him his main meal in the lunchtime because he was...well, he was married but his family were all back in Poland and because he was a German Pole...and that's, shall we say mixed race, he wasn't keen to go back there at all. So in the end he went to Australia, he immigrated to Australia. But that was the only one. Certainly at other times of the year, like hay and harvest, we did the teas.

JMW: Yes.

**0.20.20**

JB: Take teas out to the field.

JMW: Yes, were you involved in that, as a child?

JB: Oh yes, oh yes, that's how I learned to drive the Land Rover when I was very young (laughs), taking the four gallon can of tea to the field and the scones and pancakes and what not.

JMW: Was it your mother who made those?

JB: Yes.

JMW: So, the farm kitchen was a hub of the house?

JB: That's right, it was the hub of the house, the hub of activity.

JMW: Yes.

JB: And there was baking done every day.

JMW: Right. And how did she cook, what sort of cooker did she have?

JB: Initially it was an old black-leaded stove and then we got an Esse cooker which was the original sort of Aga type, there's no Esse cookers now. So that was on twenty-four hours a day.

JMW: And did your mother have any help in the house?

JB: Yes, we had a live-in housekeeper.

JMW: Right. Somebody who stayed with you a long time?

JB: Yes, I don't remember the ones, the first ones, but certainly Mrs Kirk, she must have been with us about nine or ten years.

JMW: And did she do, did she do all the cooking or help your mother do the cooking?

JB: No, my mother did all the cooking. She would help prepare the vegetables and do the housework because there were no modern... (Laughs)...things were just beginning to get washing machines and things. But we still had the cooper boiler down in an outhouse which had, the fire had to be lit under it in a Monday morning, to get the washing done. So there was a lot, housework was a lot heavier too in those days.

**0.22.34**

JMW: Oh yes. And did she have her own room?

JB: Yes, yes she had.

JMW: So, how big was the farmhouse?

JB: Scullery, kitchen, dining room, office, sitting room, first floor there were four bedrooms and a bathroom, and then there were two attic bedrooms. So there were six bedrooms all told.



JMW: And was that sort of within the farm building courtyard?

JB: No.

JMW: No, set on its own?

JB: Yes.

JMW: And regarding your schooling, you started off at The Isle School?

JB: Yes, the seat of education (laughs).

JMW: At the age of-?

JB: I suppose I was about five, I can't remember, can't remember that far back (laughs).

JMW: And did you walk down at that age?

JB: Yes, yes. Well, there were boys and girls up at Culcloy and they walked down and by the time they got to our road end we just joined on and there was quite a...there were about a dozen of us, going down the road here.

JMW: Yes, it accumulated.

JB: Yes. So we never thought it was a long way.

JMW: No.

JB: Though from Cu cloy down to The Isle was almost two miles.

JMW: And presumably some of this development that's happened, that would have not been there, the new houses and so on?

JB: What? Rosie's Brae?

#### **0.24.27**

JMW: Yes.

JB: Oh, no, there was no-.

JMW: So it would start at about where the manse is or-?

JB: No, the next house up [REDACTED].

JMW: Oh yes, ok.

JB: You know where Jane lives? These two houses were the last in the village when I was at The Isle School. And of course there was no, nothing up here, there was no toy town at the back and along where the car park is, along the main street, that was a row of little white cottages.

JMW: I've seen photographs, yes. So were you aware, as a child, that it was a seafaring and fishing village? Was that something that you-?

JB: Oh yes. Yes, because we all went swimming and forgot to go back for the afternoon lessons and things (laughter). If the tide was right, we were in swimming and we just ignored the bell and whatnot. And then head teacher, whoever she was, or...the last one that I had was Marian Sunderland's mother, Mrs Johnston, and she would come down and

get us out of the water and take us back and give us six crossed hands. And if you went home and said to your father you got the belt, then you got it again.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: It wasn't 'Don't you touch my daughter'.

JMW: No, no, I'm well aware of that, yes.

JB: And it didn't do us any harm. But there were always...the school was right on the seashore and then big high tides that came over the dyke and into the playground so there was always...we always knew about the water.

JMW: And was it a single room school?

JB: No, two.

JMW: Two, right. Divided by age?

#### **0.26.46**

JB: Yes, roughly.

JMW: Right.

JB: Roughly. There were one or...well, there was one particular child who was slow and if...whoever was first finished their sums or whatever had to go and teach this boy. The money would...we'd cardboard money and we'd to teach him how to... which money was which and how to add it up.

JMW: And did children mind doing that?

JB: No, that was just something you did.

JMW: Yes.

JB: It's only in the last fifty years that we've had so many people interfering. And really, this had caused more trouble than anything else.

JMW: And were there two teachers?

JB: Two teachers, yes. There was only one spell when I had a man teacher at The Isle. All the rest of the time it was women and one of the ladies, Miss Gass, she used to give one of us a note to take up to the butcher's and we just thought it was her twopence worth of mince and she married him (laughter).

JMW: Right.

JB: So we were obviously the-

JMW: Go-betweeners.

JB: -go-betweeners.

JMW: Yes.

JB: But we never thought of opening her note or anything like that, it was just, you did it.

JMW: And that was an Isle of Whithorn butcher?

JB: Yes. See the big white house at this end, there's a bungalow and then a small sort of garage thing and the big one.

JMW: Yes.

**0.28.58**

JB: That's where the butcher was.

JMW: Right. So The Isle had a fairly full range of shops?

JB: Yes, we had three grocer's shops.

JMW: Goodness.

JB: And that was, I'm not, I'm only going back my time, before that there were umpteen, I think at one stage there were eleven pubs (laughs).

JMW: Goodness.

JB: Every second house must have been a pub, about a hundred years ago.

JMW: And you remember, you wouldn't have perhaps gone in, but you remember The Steam Packet being in existence at that time?

JB: Oh yes, yes. No, we didn't go in, ladies didn't go in.

JMW: And that was common, I presume, that women didn't go in?

JB: No, women just didn't go into public houses, no. And the man and his sister who had it, when I was wee, they had sixteen spaniel dogs, and they were all called after spirits; gin, brandy, rum (laughter). So, yes, and I was very brave...when I was sixteen I saw our Land Rover sitting outside The Steam Packet and the shepherd had borrowed it for something completely different. So I ran down on my bike, so I walked into The Steam Packet and told him to get out and get up the road and then got back on my bike and pedalled like mad so that I would be home before him and when he got home I sacked him and he said 'You can't do that', I said 'I can' and my father at that time was in hospital and when he came out of hospital he said 'You shouldn't be in the pub in working hours'.

JMW: So you'd assumed a fair amount of authority at the age of sixteen?

JB: Yes, I was there, it had to be done.

JMW: So, what siblings did you have, if any?

JB: I've got an elder sister and a younger sister. My elder sister was more horsey, I was more mechanical, and my young sister was very horsey, that was the only difference, I was the odd one in the middle, mechanical, I wanted to know how things worked.

**0.31.48**

JMW: Yes. So, you must have been really quite close to Burrow Head camp then, during the war.

JB: Yes, next farm down.

JMW: Yes. So do you remember it being built?

JB: No, no I'm just...I was only born in October '39.

JMW: So, they had...well, you'd be too young to remember anyway, but do you know when they built it?

JB: No. About then, about then. We were very luck in that when the Ministry had come to view where they could build the camp it was a foggy day and they missed our potato fields on the way up, they were looking...otherwise it might have been just there.

JMW: Yes, and it would have been compulsory purchased, I assume.

JB: But no, I remember the, I don't remember when it was tented, I've seen pictures of it, it was a tented place but I do remember the Nissan Huts and going up there for children's parties and things, after the war.

JMW: Right.

JB: It was the first time we'd seen so many sweets and they were in big white enamel buckets, full of sweets. So all of us, I think, were very sick (laughs).

JMW: Yes, yes. So those parties were given when the camp was still under military control and it was a what? A good-will gesture to the community or-?

JB: Yes, yes, sort of like a children's Christmas party and of course the Poles and things that were in it by that time, their families were all back in Poland so they were only too delighted to play with kids and entertain kids because, after all these years they'd have missed so much of their own children's lives.

JMW: Quite. Do you remember anything of the target practice? Do you remember any of the aeroplanes?

JB: No, I can't say I do but I remember going round the fields collecting all the silver paper that had been dropped by the planes.

### **0.34.37**

JMW: Right.

JB: Because this was to scramble the radar, I think, it was just the start of radar. That was one of the things, we went round collecting all this silver paper from the fields.

JMW: And in terms of personnel, it must have been quite busy up there.

JB: Yes, it would be during the war.

JMW: Both men on foot and in troop carriers or-?

JB: I suppose they had a certain number of vehicles but not very many, they would...most of them came by train to Whithorn and marched from Whithorn out. It wasn't a case of being transported.

JMW: And so you would see a fair amount of movement along this road back here, I suppose.

JB: Oh yes, as I say, we used to march up from the school behind them. And in 1947, when we had the big snow, the camp was still full.

JMW: Right.

JB: So we got as many as they could to start digging, to dig us out.

JMW: Right.

JB: Because we were totally cut off for a couple of weeks.

JMW: Goodness. So, what was the sort of snowfall you had?

JB: Well, after two weeks we walked along the top of the dykes to get to The Isle School.

JMW: Goodness. That's...so several feet.

JB: Yes. And the Whinney Hill at [?], it was full to the top. And after ten days the farmers who had dairies, like Cu cloy, Outreach, Stannic, Isle Farm, I think, they collected their waggons together and set off to get to Whithorn with the milk and they'd to knock down dykes on the way to Whithorn, like the Whinney Hill, to get round it, they couldn't dig through all that depth of snow so they'd to build the dykes on their way back up at night so it was a long, long day and I think they'd got fairly well lubricated in Whithorn because they brought back a bucket of coal for everybody in the village and a loaf of bread and the empty milk butts. But unfortunately they put the empty milk butts on top of some of the warm bread so the bread was odd shapes (laughs). But nobody complained.

**0.37.41**

JMW: No, I'm sure. So, what had happened to the milk during those days when you couldn't get out?

JB: One of the men separated, up at the dairy, all the milk and Mrs Kirk who was the housekeeper, she churned all day.

JMW: Right.

JB: And we just had loads and loads of loads of butter which officially you weren't allowed to do anything with.

JMW: Right.

JB: Because rationing was on then.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: But you couldn't waste it so you certainly handed it out a bit.

JMW: Yes, yes. And do you remember much impact of the war on the farm, did you find people being called up that you needed and-?

JB: I don't remember that, I was just too wee at that stage. I know they were called up but I don't remember it.

JMW: And farming would be a reserved occupation I presume.

JB: Yes.

JMW: So, your father stayed on the farm and some of the men, presumably, couldn't-?

JB: Yes.

JMW: And did you find that food was shorter than before or were you ok because you produced food?

JB: We were very much ok, we didn't, as far as I know, we didn't suffer at all because in those days if you wanted a piece of mutton or lamb then you just slaughtered one. You slaughtered a pig or you...and we had our own milk, our own cream, our own butter. We were all, again in that time, you went out and collected blackberries and you made blackberry jelly and jam and rosehip syrup and all these things that nobody does now.

**0.40.02**

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: It was just part of life, you just did it and then of course there was the black market.

JMW: Was that quite vigorous in this area?

JB: I think so.

JMW: Yes.

JB: I think so. You would hear the odd, as kids we heard the odd goings on at night (laughs).

JMW: Would people approach you to give them extra-?

JB: No, I think it was a sort of exchange, shall we say? And the chap who made ice-cream in Whithorn, at the time, he got a lot of jam sugar, so he would bring us out some jam sugar.

JMW: I see, yes.

JB: And he would maybe get a couple of dozen eggs, you see, in its place, it was a bartering system.

JMW: Yes, and do you remember having to see...have the farm blacked out, the windows?

JB: No, I don't remember but it did happen for my father was fined two pounds, one of his daughters and there were only two of us at the time, so...had left one of the attic...a light on in the attic and it was seen from Stein.

JMW: Right. And there was an observation post out there was there?

JB: At Stein, hush.

JMW: Yes.

JB: So we were fined two pounds for showing a light. Which was quite a lot of money.

JMW: Yes, yes, well obviously they were vigilant.

JB: Yes, indeed. Indeed.

JMW: Was your father in the Home Guard at all?

**0.42.14**

JB: Yes, oh yes. I think all the farmers were in the Home Guard.

JMW: Yes.

JB: And a lot of the men who worked on the farms too.

JMW: Yes. Did they have a hall at The Isle of Whithorn where they-?

JB: The village hall, they used.

JMW: Right. And that's where any weapons and so on were kept?

JB: Oh, I don't know. I don't where the weapons were kept.

JMW: Do you know what duties he had?

JB: No, no. I believe he had a nickname of 'Bomber Brown' but I don't know (laughter). No, they were all in it and they used to have wars with Stranraer and things, I understand.

JMW: Oh, right. Stranraer Home Guard?

JB: Yes.

JMW: I see.

JB: It was probably a good night out (laughs).

JMW: And do you know when the camp changed from being this target practice into being a camp for displaced persons?

JB: It must have been '44.

JMW: Right.

JB: Thereabout.

JMW: So when you were coming back and forward to school was it RAF men you saw?

JB: No, soldiers.

JMW: Soldiers.

JB: The RAF were at Kidsdale.

JMW: Ok.

#### **0.43.46**

JB: There was a wee airfield at Kidsdale.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: So that's where they were.

JMW: Yep, and do you remember aircraft, do you remember the sound of aircraft taking off?

JB: I can't say I do, I can't say I do.

JMW: So, the displaced persons, were working on the farms or-?

JB: Yes, a lot of them were.

JMW: And do you know how they got assigned to that particular camp?

JB: No.

JMW: You just saw them around.

JB: John Scoular might be able to tell you.

JMW: Yes.

JB: But I can't, he's just that little bit older than me (laughs).

JMW: And nationality wise, do you know what they were?

JB: More, I think they were mostly Polish up there.

JMW: Yes.

JB: The Germans were at the camp at Newton Stewart which is now the caravan site up at [?].

JMW: Oh right, yes.

JB: That's where the POW camp was and they used to be brought down by lorry to work on the various farms but they had to go back every night.

JMW: Yes, well, presumably the Poles, didn't...there wouldn't be any sort of security as regards them, because-.

JB: Not really.

#### **0.45.13**

JMW: And did a few of them settle or marry?

JB: Oh, yes, a lot of them did.

JMW: I know there are some Polish names in the area.

JB: Yes. Well, one of them was Ben the blacksmith.

JMW: Whom I knew, yes.

JB: He wasn't in this camp but he settled here and married and there he stayed.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: And quite a few of them that worked on farms married girls from the village, most of them, I think, are all away now, but a couple of years ago I was in The Queen's collecting for something and this big chap took out a raffle ticket and wrote his name, Peter Walskie. I said 'Is your father Peter Walskie or was he?' 'Yes'. I said 'He taught me to drive a tractor when I was nine' and he's still alive. He lives in Dumfries and he's ninety-six or something.

JMW: Goodness. Right, so you had Polish people working on your father's farm? Had they been on farms in Poland or were they kind of new?

JB: I've no idea, I've no idea. We also had Italians, we'd four Italians that stayed in part of the Morrach house for a few months and they were very good at singing, no good at working.

JMW: Right, right. And did they enter into village life, did they go to the cinema and the shops and so on?



JB: I don't know. I was only wee (laughs).

JMW: Yes. And so when did they camp cease altogether.

JB: '48, '49 about then, I think. Because they were all, the camp was still fully functioning in the big snow of '47, as I say, when they dug us out because this snow landed in the one night.

JMW: Amazing.

JB: And my father had heard somebody walking round the house and went out and followed the footsteps till he caught up with this man who turned out to be Russian. So brought him back to the house because he was lost and gave him food and soup, till morning, and sent him up and told him to follow the telegraph poles and he would get back to the camp.

**0.48.24**

And, as I say, we had a lot of them trying to dig us out but we'd to go out looking for the lambs, it was the end of March time. So all the men on the farm had to go out looking for...and digging the sheep out of the snowdrifts and things and then the lambs were brought into the kitchen, three-quarters dead and, as I said, we had the big old fashioned range in those days, and a thirty dozen egg box had a division in the middle, so you put a lamb in each end and put them in the cool oven to defrost.

JMW: Goodness.

JB: And then my elder sister and I were given the bottles with milk and a bit of brandy in them to feed these lambs.

JMW: Right.

JB: And as they came to they were put into the playpen in the corner of the kitchen with my young sister (laughs). And she loved that. She was only two, two and a half then.

JMW: Did you lose much livestock?

JB: Quite a number of sheep, quite a number of sheep, but fortunately not really so many lambs, considering how many we had to defrost.

JMW: Did that go on over a day or two?

JB: A week or two (laughs).

JMW: A week or two.

JB: Because they'd lost the mother and then we had them as pet lambs anyway.

JMW: Yes. And I suppose feeding the cattle would have been difficult?

JB: Uhuh.

JMW: You must have had to get straw-.

JB: Most of them were still in the sheds for the win-, they'd been in all winter so we still had straw and things in stacks in the stack-yard and we still had some sugar beet that had been in pits, and we had been using it all winter.

**0.50.44**

JMW: Yes.

JB: So we just carried on to supplement whatever else because they weren't out at the grass for long enough. And nobody could get in with supplies except they brought a ship in.

JMW: Right.

JB: To feed the guys in the camp.

JMW: Oh, yes.

JB: Not to feed the village but to feed the guys in the camp.

JMW: Did the villagers manage to get any of the supplies?

JB: Probably (laughter), probably.

JMW: So, the...you mentioned the stack-yard, do you remember mill days?

JB: Yes. The old traction engine, it came, it was Hughie Smith who's Whithorn...how long have you been in the Whithorn area?

JMW: Twenty years.

JB: Twenty years. Do you remember May Smith?

JMW: I know the name very well, yes. From Isle Street, was it?

JB: Yes.

JMW: Yes.

JB: Her father had the traction engine and came round with the mill.

JMW: Right. So he wouldn't have, as it were, have a caravan to live in because he would have gone back to Whithorn, I suppose. Some did come with a living quarters.

JB: I think he had a caravan to live in because you've got to remember there were no cars.

JMW: Yes, yes. So was that a big day when the mill came?

JB: Very big day. Everybody had to be fed that day.

JMW: Right. So that kept your mother busy.

**0.52.34**

JB: Indeed (laughs), indeed.

JMW: Presumably it was planned weeks ahead?

JB: Oh yes, yes.

JMW: And you'd be ready with extra food.

JB: Extra food, extra soup (laughs).

JMW: About how many people were involved, do you remember?

JB: Oh, there'd be a dozen or thereabouts.

JMW: And Hughie Smith came with some men, as well as the men on the farm, or did-?

JB: I don't remember, I don't remember him bringing men.

JMW: So it would be your own employees? And men, women and children?

JB: No, the children we tried to keep away from the mill, too many moving parts.

JMW: Yes.

JB: But, yes, the women helped too.

JMW: Now was that one of the steam ones or was that diesel?

JB: It was a steam.

JMW: It was a steam one. Quite a noisy thing I suppose.

JB: Yes, yes, I remember that.

JMW: And it had to be supplied with water all the day, I suppose.

JB: Yes it needed water. So we had the buckets from the horse trough carried to the engine.

JMW: And did women do the...undo the sheaves at the top or was that men's work?

JB: No, the women, both did it actually but women.

JMW: Yes, and was the stack-yard near the farmhouse?

JB: No, well, a quarter of a mile. Because the farm house was at the bottom of a little hill and the steading was at the top.

#### **0.54.41**

JMW: Right, ok, and then the grain would be stored in a barn there?

JB: Mm.

JMW: Was it oats?

JB: Yes, corn, as we called it.

JMW: Yes.

JB: It was before the days of the wheat and barley and oilseed rape and everything else.

JMW: And was it used for feeding animals or was any of it for human consumption?

JB: No, it was all used as animal feed. It was bruised to make it into...like flakes, like your scotch porridge oats.

JMW: Right, right.

JB: That's what it looked like when it was fed to the animals.

JMW: Right, and who did the bruising? Was that in The Isle at-?

JB: No, no, we had our own bruiser and one of the men did it.

JMW: Right. Do you remember Bysbie Mill working at The Isle?

JB: No, no, it was gone before...before my day but that's where I smoked my first Woodbine (laughter) on the way from school.

JMW: Ahah, it would be hidden from view there.

JB: Absolutely.

JMW: And Port Yerrock mill would have gone before that, would it?

JB: Probably, yes.

JMW: I've seen postcards of it in full working order but it's possibly even the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I don't know at what point it stopped working.

JB: I can't tell you.

JMW: So-.

### **0.56.33**

JB: But there were all the regulations. My mother kept a thousand hens.

JMW: Goodness.

JB: And I think the price she got at the grading station was eleven and a half old pennies so it was just anything to make a little bit of money and that was how she did it and of course in the snow we couldn't get the eggs away to the grading station at Newton Stewart.

JMW: Right.

JB: So Father phoned up the Ministry of Agriculture and said this was the situation, could he take some eggs down to the village? No, because they hadn't been stamped.

JMW: Right.

JB: And my father promptly told them that stamping them meant they were six weeks old, whereas he was going to send fresh ones down...so he just took them down to the shops anyway. They needed food and what was the sense of...letting them rot when you could still get a penny or two for them. And then when the inspector came to look at eggs, at one stage, Mother was asking him about...and he said 'you can only keep them and eat them yourselves if they're cracked.' So, it was easy enough to crack a lot of eggs, how stupid (laughs). So, my mum said to him, 'would you like two or three cracked eggs scrambled?' He didn't say no (laughs) because it was what, one egg a week?

JMW: Yes. A thousand hens, that sounds like a pretty big commercial enterprise.

JB: Well, it was just something else we did. And we collected the eggs and then we had to wipe them all clean and put them in the boxes for the...to take to the station. It was all hand done and all hands on deck.

JMW: Yes. And were the hens in sheds or they-?

JB: No, they were free range during the day but we locked them up at night because of the foxes. Because a fox could make a big mess if they got in.

JMW: Indeed, yes.

JB: I remember too, after the war, going up to Glasgow with my parents. I followed Dad into St Enoch's Hotel and he goes up to the reception desk and asks for two rooms. 'Sorry sir, fully booked.' So he goes into one pocket and puts three eggs on the desk, goes into the other puts three 'How many rooms sir?' So he got his two rooms for half a doz-.

**0.59.55**

JMW: That proves the rarity of eggs, the value.

JB: Yes, to the city people.

JMW: Oh, yes, you couldn't get them.

JB: It was dried egg they lived on.

JMW: So, as regards harvest, did you have any extra help in or was it just the men on the farm?

JB: No, locals, locals.

JMW: Did you ever have squads in?

JB: Just the potato squads.

JMW: Just the Irish ones, cause there were local squads as well.

JB: Yea, but I suppose you could call them squads of women that came up to thin out the turnips and hoe turnips.

JMW: Yes.

JB: And shaw turnips at the appropriate time of year.

JMW: Yes.

JB: But they all came from the village.

JMW: Yes.

JB: Or from the wives of the farmworkers, anyway.

JMW: And do you remember what equipment was used for the harvesting of the oats?

JB: An old Albion binder.

JMW: And that was a horse-drawn one or tractor drawn?

JB: I think we were very modern, I think we'd a wee Fergusson 35 tractor.

JMW: Right. And you had that during the war?

JB: So, the binder that you had, did that just drop the sheaves and tied them?

JMW: Yes, and then everybody available stooked them up into eight sheaves in a stook so that you could let the air through them to...summers were better in those days.

JMW: Yes, I'm sure. And would they have to be turned at some point to air them out or did you just leave them in the stooks?

JB: You just left them in the stooks and then you carted them into the stack-yard and built them into stacks for use at a later date.

JMW: Yes. So, was there anyone in particular who did the building of the stacks?

JB: No, I think they were all pretty good at it.

JMW: And they would be thatched on top.

JB: Yes.

JMW: I've heard of people sort of doing decorative kind of finishes to them.

JB: No we (laughs)...no, no, there was no decoration on ours.

JMW: But roped down presumably.

JB: Yes, oh yes, roped down and the ropes weighted with big stones.

JMW: Yes. And how long would they stay as stacks before the thrashing?

JB: I don't know, I don't know. I do know when we got near the bottom of the stack I kept well away because I have never liked rats. And we used to put a chicken wire round the bottom of the stack and putting the wee Border Terrier and whatever other terriers that were around to clean up the rat population. But I stayed well away from-.

JMW: You mentioned going away to boarding school. Was that quite common among farmers' children?

JB: Not really. There were a few, mostly boys, farmers' sons, that went away. A few of the girls. I had no option, I had to go because, fortunately or unfortunately, I passed the eleven-plus when I was ten so I was not allowed to go to any school in Dumfries and Galloway.

JMW: Right. Because more advanced schools were further away?

JB: No, because I was just too young to take a place-

#### **1.04.58**

JMW: I see.

JB: -in Dumfries and Galloway.

JMW: I see, yes.

JB: So, I was sent away.

JMW: And was it Edinburgh you went to?

JB: Edinburgh, yes. That school is no longer there, it was the Ministers' Daughters College but most of us...the ministers' daughters got in very cheaply, for about a quarter of the price that the non-ministers paid. Not long after I left, or after Annette left, it became a bank college but I think it's now just flats.

JMW: Right. And did you go up with your sisters?

JB: Yes, we got on the train at Dunraggit and off we set for Glasgow and changed trains in Glasgow though to Edinburgh.

JMW: Did you miss The Isle when you went?

JB: Of course.

JMW: Yes.

JB: Of course. It was home for one thing and all our pals from The Isle School were still here.

JMW: Yes.

JB: Because our pals were all the village children or the farm children.

JMW: Yes. Did you find that that separated you a bit when you came back, the fact that you'd had to go away to school? Or did you-?

JB: Yes, because when I finished school I was home for a year, working on the farm, and then I went to nursing and I was away for...from then until 1985.

JMW: Goodness.

JB: So, I was away more or less from 1950/51 to '85. So, everybody who...round about who talks about their children, and I don't know them.

### **1.07.18**

JMW: Yes. Did you visit The Isle in between?

JB: Oh yes, I came home for weekends or days off. Then I went away to...well, I trained in Glasgow, in the Sick Children's, and then in Dumfries Infirmary and then Irvine Central for my 'midder' and then I went back and specialised in paediatrics. And then I went to Africa.

JMW: Goodness.

JB: And I was thirteen years in Africa.

JMW: Wow! That was quite a different environment.

JB: Indeed, indeed, I saw it all from the war to the Mugabe regime in Rhodesia. Then I came home to nurse my father and then my mother and that's how...how life rolls on.

JMW: Yes. And your father built this house?

JB: Yes.

JMW: That's a remarkable view.

JB: Yes, this is where he...he was always very keen on the sea and we...well, he got his first yacht in 1950/51 and we used to go to the Isle of Man for weekends and things. I was the sailor.

JMW: Right. The mechanical one and the sailor.

JMW: Right.

JB: The crew, there was one Maguire, Charlie, was the crew and Wullie Murray from Ersick and Tom McCreath from Arbreck, my father and myself, we were the other ones. (Telephone rings.) I'm not answering it, it's one of these-

JMW: It's entirely up to you.

JB: - nuisance calls. I get about eight or ten a day.

JMW: That's far too many.

JB: It'll stop in a second.

JMW: There you are. Did you know sea captains at The Isle?

JB: Yes, when I was small there were four and they were all masters in sail.

### **1.10.09**

JMW: Right.

JB: So, they were all old, old guys, then, and of course all long gone now.

JMW: Yes, do you remember their names?

JB: There was Captain Weaver and Captain Kite and Captain Robb and Captain Learmonth.

JMW: Did they wear a uniform of any sort?

JB: No, they were all old, they were all well retired when I knew them.

JMW: Yes.

JB: They used to sit on a bench behind John McWilliam's shop and put the world to right every day, I think (laughs).

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: And McWilliam's shop, what do you remember about that because nobody from outside this area will know what it was like?

JB: (Laughs) The leaning, the leaning shop. McWilliams were ship builders in The Isle and when they gave up shipbuilding about, I think, 1852, the wood they had left from shipbuilding they built the shop with.

JMW: Right.

JB: So, it was very good wood, that's why it lasted so long. Oh, no, I've known McWilliams' shop all my life and it always had a lean.

JMW: Yes, yes. I'm sorry I didn't get to interview the McWilliams because that would have been interesting. So, did your family do their shopping in The Isle?

JB: Yes.

JMW: Every day or-?

JB: Oh, no, no, no. no, no, no. The grocer came up once a week. When I was at...well older, what happened in the wartime, I don't suppose they had the petrol to go round the farms, you probably just got your shopping once a month or something.



JMW: Yep.

**1.12.37**

JB: Because they could all cook and could all store, they were no freezers and things and fridges. But one of the things we used to do was go up to Glasgow, once a year, to Coopers and bought everything for a year, be it tinned ham, tinned fruit, coffee, the lot, and it came down by carrier or by train.

JMW: Were there other mobile services that came up?

JB: Oh, it would be the '50s before the butcher from Whithorn used to come round once a week. And if Mum asked him for a bone to make soup he charged her, but before he left, every time, he would throw two or three bones to the dogs. If mother asked for one she had to pay for it but the dogs got theirs for free every time (laughs).

JMW: I have heard and this may be before your time that there was a cart or two that came round farms selling china, hawkers, as they would have been known.

JB: No, I don't remember. I remember hawkers coming to the door but I couldn't have told you what they were selling.

JMW: And were they welcome visitors or-?

JB: No, not really. Because you were always frightened that they would set fire to something, they would go to sleep in one of your barns at night and light a candle or light a cigarette or...you were a bit wary about them...having them round your place.

JMW: And do you remember any tinkers coming?

JB: Oh, yes, they occasionally appeared but I don't think we ever bought anything from the tinkers because you very soon learned they had their big Mercedes cars and things just further along the road (laughter). No, that was much more modern when when they were [?] and we had one tramp who used to come, Snib Scott.

JMW: Right.

JB: And he was always dressed in his oilskins and every other bit of clothing he possessed, even in the scorching sunshine, and he would say when the sun was out 'It's a coorse nicht' (laughs). Coorse nicht. But he was just a character, he was harmless but he had the philosophy of...that you didn't need to work if your belly was full (laughs). So, if he got any...why work at all? Just go round and beg from a few people.

**1.16.24**

JMW: Was your family quite tolerant of that, did they mind giving him a bit to eat?

JB: I don't think any of the farmers minded Snib, he was just one of these characters that, as I say, harmless and just plodded on the roads and-.

JMW: And what about commercial fishing from The Isle, do you remember a larger lot of boats?

JB: Not until the '60s.

JMW: Uhuh.

JB: Went they found the scallop beds out here we had a lot of boats.

JMW: Right.

JB: We'd up to a couple of dozen trawlers coming in at night. And I've seen as many as two dozen tied up for the weekend.

JMW: Right.

JB: In the harbour. But that was the '60s and then I think they just emptied the beds and now there's no nearly so many. And, of course, with all these quotas now they can't go to sea so many days.

JMW: But prior to the scallops you don't remember much about white fishing?

JB: No. There were always wee boats in the village and you could always get your cod and your mackerel and your salmon and whatnot but it wasn't commercial. It was the Maguire family, mostly-

JMW: Right.

JB: -that did the fishing, they were the fishermen.

JMW: Yes.

JB: So, what do you know about the Maguire's history?

JB: I was going to say 'Go and ask Ernie', Ernie died this year'.

JMW: Yes, sadly.

JB: Sean Maguire's the one to tell you about that. He's the local Harbour Master.

### **1.18.18**

JMW: Yes, well I could well ask him.

JB: I think he would be the one that could give you the history, I would get it wrong (laughs).

JMW: And did you...did you go into Whithorn much or did you find The Isle was sort of your hub, as it were?

JB: No, the farm was it.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: It...we didn't run around the village, either. Some of the village kids came up to play at the farm and the farm kids, of course, played but we didn't go down and play in The Isle.

JMW: Were there things that you did get from Whithorn, like boots and shoes and that kind of thing?

JB: I don't remember that.

JMW: Right.

JB: No, I remember going to Newton Stewart and getting shoes and I remember that there was a shoe shop in Whithorn, Martin's, but I don't actually remember buying shoes in there.

But maybe when I was wee I was taken in there and shoes were bought for me, I don't know. So there was a shoe shop, no, everything was kind of self-contained. We made our own entertainment, you read, you played, as I say, there was no television or anything like that and in the summer you got your sandwiches and juice or water in a bottle and away down we walked to the shore here and as long as we were home for teatime that was it. We were swimming, playing on the shore.

JMW: Do you remember any children who went without shoes in the summertime?

JB: My father.

JMW: Oh right.

JB: When he was a child. They got one pair, he got one pair of boots in September and when his feet got too big for them that was him till the next September.

JMW: Right.

### **1.20.48**

JB: And he was walking from the Morrach farm to The Isle School.

JMW: Goodness.

JB: Yep. And then for a while when he went to Whithorn School for a short time, I think a year, he was a weekly boarder with the headmaster in Whithorn.

JMW: Really?

JB: And then he was away at Strathallan after that.

JMW: Were there other children who were weekly boarders?

JB: No.

JMW: Just him.

JB: Just him, that boarded with the headmaster, there were probably others that boarded elsewhere.

JMW: Right, and that would be in the schoolhouse opposite the school in Whithorn. Now, Whithorn had a cinema, do you remember going into it?

JB: Oh, yes indeed (laughs). Mr Chamberlain's, yes. My mother was very good at taking us ev-, well, most Saturday nights, to the five o'clock house to watch a cowboy film (laughs).

JMW: Right.

JB: But it had to be the early house and we were back home by about half past seven, I think, because that would be well past our bedtime for that.

JMW: I know it was quite well used by troops as well. And what about the NAAFI here on the quay?

JB: Well, it was the WVS that supplied the teas and the coffees, made the...that's what was down there. But as children we were never allowed in there, no, no. We might have heard something (laughs). I must have photographs of them somewhere.

JMW: Do you remember in the '50s, for instance, people coming to The Isle for holidays?

JB: Yes, they used to come from...the 'home girls' used to come from Newton Stewart.

JMW: Ok.

### **1.23.34**

JB: From the children's home there to...it's the house opposite the bowling green, I think it's called Hall House.

JMW: I think I know where you mean, yes.

JB: That's where the 'home girls' came and...for their summer holidays.

JMW: Now, was that an orphanage or...you don't know?

JB: Don't know. I do remember in the, it would be the '50s. '60s, Galloway House was a school and it was Glasgow Corporation that sent pupils down from there for so many weeks at a time.

JMW: Now, the holiday business is a reasonably important part of The Isle and there's quite a lot of Bed & Breakfasts.

JB: Yes, there's too many holiday homes in The Isle, really.

JMW: Well, like many seaside places.

JB: Yes, and it's also...those of us who are...do things...committees and things like that, we're all getting older and the young ones are not interested, not interested. And I've just finished nine years as Company Secretary for Isle Futures.

JMW: Right.

JB: And I thought 'No, that's me, I'm finished', 'But you'll come back after a year?' because we've got to go out for a year. I said 'I'll be seventy-three, nearly seventy-four then, no'.

JMW: Well, you hope other people will come forward.

JB: You hope. And then last week somebody was at me to...the Community Council, go on the Community Council. I said 'Not starting that. My time.'

JMW: So, looking at The Isle now, what are the biggest changes you can think of? What are the trends that you see?

JB: The 'won't works'. People who are unemployed and not wanting to be employed.

JMW: Yes.

### **1.25.08**

JB: Not wanting to do anything. Very likely to complain about some...weeds growing on the pavement or weeds so and so, and so and so. And as I say 'Well, why don't you just pull them when you're out for a walk with the dog?' 'Oh, it's not our job'. I said 'It's everybody's job, keep the place tidy'. But they don't.

JMW: Obviously the employment prospects have altered dramatically.

JB: Yes, yes.

JMW: I imagine you remember full employment and-

JB: Yes.

JMW: -work everywhere? Too much work perhaps?

JB: Too much and all the school holidays the kids were utilised, when they were old enough, for one job or another.

JMW: And the demographics, presumably, there are more older people in The Isle?

JB: Oh yes, yes. And an awful lot of them are foreigners (laughs). 'White Settlers' as I call them in the village.

JMW: So, when did you think that trend began?

JB: I would say, probably, the '70s.

JMW: And is that when Rosie's Brae was developed?

JB: That's when toy town, the chalets, were developed, '72, I think. Rosie's Brae was after that a bit.

JMW: And you feel that's had an impact on The Isle that's not wholly beneficial?

JB: Yes. Some of the ones that have moved in are very, very good and very, very helpful and others don't do a thing but take everything. They won't lift a finger to help with anything but when it's the old folk's Christmas Dinner, that's free, they're there.

JMW: Right.

JB: When it's the bus trip, it's free, they're there. But you say 'Could you bake a scone for such and such?', 'Oh, no'. 'Would you buy a raffle ticket?', 'No'.

### **1.28.52**

JMW: So, there's been a sort of dilution of community life, in a way?

JB: Mm, yea, which is a great shame, I think.

JMW: Yes. And do you see a...for instance, a change in accent from your childhood, was there an Isle of Whithorn or Whithorn accent that's going a bit?

JB: No, I think that's much the same. It has stayed much the same.

JMW: And what about the mixing between locally born and bred people and people who have come in?

JB: Difficult, it depends on the various layers of society. Some of the local yokels, no time for any of them, others of us try but it doesn't always succeed.

JMW: Right, so you think there's a sort of tension.

JB: Mm. And can be ten-, well everywhere, as I say I was with Isle Futures and trying to do this and regenerate the village and blah, blah, blah, blah and we would have a raffle or we'd have a such and such. 'Where does the money go?', 'Well, such and such.' They don't

realise that no matter what you do there are costs, you've either got to hire a hall and pay for electricity and there's all...it's not a hundred pennies in the pound are there, and they just can't grasp that.

JMW: Do you think there's a level of resentment about house prices, for instance, that have gone up because people want to live by the sea?

JB: That again happened, I would say, in the '70s, when the house prices in England were high and they sold down there, bought up here and the local people couldn't afford to buy. But people from the south thought it was cheap up here.

JMW: Yes.

JB: But the locals couldn't afford it and that caused tension.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: And, as I say, people being so politically correct now, as somebody who'd come, in fact it was the minister when he first came, he said 'It's very difficult to know who to acknowledge'. I said 'Down here is easy', I said 'If you're in the car you wave to everybody and if you're walking you say hello to everybody'. But I didn't realise he was so against the Catholics at that time. He has improved, considerably, but I just didn't...but then I suppose with nursing and being away in other places and different cultures and creeds and religions and whatnot I just accepted, 'don't try and shove it down my throat, I'll not shove my opinion down yours.' Let's all just get on.

**1.32.50**

JMW: We haven't talked about the Church in The Isle, did your father take the family to church?

JB: No, no. My grandfather did, he was...now what do you call it? The Session Clerk, I think. My grandmother was the organist but Dad and Mum were not staunch church-goers.

JMW: So, you didn't particularly go to the church?

JB: We went to Sunday school.

JMW: Right.

JB: And then, being away at school and going to the Ministers' Daughters College, I think we had more than our fill of religion. And that sort of maybe put us off a bit and then, when I was nursing, the hours in those days were so...you very often just wanted to sleep when you got off and not go anywhere.

JMW: Yes, yes.

JB: Because that was still seventy-two hour weeks. Now they do less than half.

JMW: Was the church on The Isle a big part of the community when they were full congregations.

JB: Yes, it as well attended for many, many a long year but I think too it depends on the minister. Some have a bit of hellfire and brimstone about them and they're interesting, they keep your attention. If they've got a monotone voice, you tend to drift away, at least that's what I think. I support it and I do this, that and the next thing for it but I'm not as...as

he said when he came [?], I was in his little black book. I said 'I go to church for weddings, christenings and funerals' and unfortunately it's mostly the latter now. And then I reminded him when he said...I said 'Remember I have crawled round the Isle Church floor, Glasserton Church floor, Whithorn Church floor, putting in your loop systems, and their microphones and things. Because it was Kenny Barr that was asked to do that and it's difficult to do these things on your own, you need somebody to unwire it...so as I say I've crawled all round all the churches.

**1.36.02**

JMW: What about flooding at The Isle? I've seen photographs of quite a significant flood.

JB: Yes, 1972, we lost the harbour.

JMW: Right.

JB: Half of it, at this end, and The Isle was well-flooded.

JMW: Right.

JB: And we had to get the army to come and fill crates with stones to keep the water out of the rest of the village.

JMW: Yes.

JB: It was a rough time that. I was working in Glasgow still but I came down for that weekend because my father had phoned me and said 'Better come down'. And the Scoulers had the Queen's Arms and the Scoulers and my father organised that there was a barrel or a couple of barrels of beer put in the hall for the army that weekend because that's where they were sleeping.

JMW: Yes.

JB: So that seemed to be...kept everybody happy that weekend and eventually they got it rebuilt. And then the last time it was 1997, twenty-five years later, that The Isle flooded again, but not...the harbour was all right, but The Steam Packet and all were flooded right along and there was a boat sailing outside the dining room window of the Steam Packet, a rowing boat was flapping against the-. And that was...my grandfather was the first Chairman of the Harbour Company, in the 1890s.

JMW: Goodness, right.

JB: And then my father ended up as Chairman. But after the storm...they had no money to do anything, it was only what, half a dozen farmers and John Scouler that were on the board or the committee, whatever you like to call it, and did what they could. After that we had to get the council to take it over because we just couldn't afford it. That was '72, '73 I think it was rebuilt.

**1.38.59**

JMW: Have you noticed climate change, would you say?

JB: Yes, well I don't know what you would call it, but yes, the weather is a lot worse in the summer than it used to be. But whether it's because of all these things, satellites and things they've put up there that has disturbed it or whether it's us down here with our coal fires, I don't know. But no, they used to say 'Oh, you remember the good days as children' but as

children the summers were good, much better than they are now. With the horses and the old binders and whatnot we would never have got a harvest in if the weather had been like it's been this year. It would just have rotted in the fields so they must have been better. As I say we didn't have the computers and the this and the that and the next thing in those days and bedtime for the Brown children, as babies and tots, was half past six and then when I was at boarding school and came home it was eight o'clock, until I was seventeen. There was no argument, bedtime was that. But then I had no problem getting up at half past four and five o'clock in the morning and doing things.

JMW: Yea.

JB: One of the things I loved doing was going out collecting the dairy herd from the far fields and bringing them in to be milked, that sort of thing.

JMW: Yea.

JB: And I wouldn't be doing it if it had been pouring wet rain, I'm quite sure.

JMW: No, no. Was your family ever involved with the lifeboat service here?

JB: No, I say that and I qualify. Dad had the big yacht and then after he got rid of it he had a smaller one, *The Vital Spark*, it was called.

JMW: Right.

JB: And when there were sailing races and things we were the rescue boat.

JMW: Oh, right, yes.

JB: Quite often we were out but not...I don't think there was an inshore rescue boat at Port William at the time.

JMW: No, probably not. We just used to go out and we did rescue a certain Mr John Scouler and a certain Miss Sarah Nairn, Spencer-Nairn (laughs) when they capsized off Stein.

#### **1.42.23**

JMW: Right.

JB: And by the time we got them we were away off Knockenharry here, with the tide rip, and of course their sail was down and it was in the water and it had the drag and with the [?] tag they were just going [?] and it didn't matter that we were on full steam ahead. So I think after that they decided they'd maybe better get married.

JMW: Do you remember regattas being a big thing at The Isle?

JB: Yes, oh yes, much, much bigger than they are now. There was every kind of rowing race...there was age boys, age girls in this rowing race or that rowing race or longer and then outboard motor races and inboard motor races. And all the swimming groups, different ages, and always the greasy pole, of course. And we also had pillow fights on that and the crowds were enormous. (Telephone rings). It'll ring seven times and go off.

JMW: I've certainly seen photographs way back to the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century of the Earls of Galloway attending the regatta, it seemed to be a big day.



JB: Yes, oh, yes, it was...I suppose...there would be very few entertainments and anybody from...that could...was within walking distance or had a pony or trap would come to the regatta and would go to Wigtown show because it was the biggest one day show in Scotland at the time and that's when all the farm people met their friends that they didn't see from one year to the next.

JMW: Yes.

JB: They met them there. Same with the regattas, anybody who's interested in fishing or sailing or whatever and they all came.

JMW: So you remember Wigtown Show days as a big day?

JB: Oh yes, wouldn't have missed it (laughs).

JMW: And do you still go now?

JB: Not so often. I did go this year in the pouring rain because-

JMW: It wasn't good.

JB: -and mud. I got there at quarter to ten in the morning and they were already hauling cars out with the tractors and I'd gone fully clothed in my oilskins, and well-waterproofed I was, but two hours was quite enough, this time.

**1.45.54**

JMW: I presume in the old days it was a big holiday, perhaps throughout the-countryside?

JB: Oh yes, the...all the farm workers went to it, there was no work on the farm on Wigtown Show day, except the absolutely essential things, like the horses had to be fed in the morning before they went, the dairy cows had to be milked in the morning and the dairyman had to be back to do the milking in the evening. But the middle of the day was free for him as well but for the ploughman or the whatever, everything stopped, everybody went away to it.

JMW: Do you remember dances afterwards?

JB: Yes, occasionally I was at a show dance. But then, you see, I was away working and nurses didn't get time off just because it was Wigtown Show.

JMW: Yes. No quite. But it was a day that people looked forward to.

JB: Yes, uhuh. There's still the formal balls where you really get dressed up, there was the golf ball, there was the Young Farmers' ball, there was this ball and this ball and now there's nothing. Everybody goes about in jeans.

JMW: Yes, so in that sense there's been a decline in civic life, perhaps, and fewer clubs and societies and things?

JB: Fewer? Well, yes, I suppose people are more aware or frightened, whichever way you put it. When we were young, the house was never locked, the keys were never out of the car because nobody was going to come and do anything.

JMW: Yep.

JB: You could walk the streets of Glasgow at night and nobody was going to attack you. Now you can't do any of these things.

JMW: Yep.

JB: You lock this and you lock that and so I think this society as a whole is more scared, really. JMW: Yep.

#### **1.48.42**

JB: Especially with the drug addictions and the...because they'll do anything for their fix.

JMW: Yea:

JB: And that's frightening. Very young and innocent I was when I was in Glasgow, we used to give the children their syringes, if they'd had an injection and been good, they got the syringes as a water pistol, you see. And that was fine until the police came I think it was [?] said 'can you stop giving them that?', 'Yes, no problem. Why?' 'Oh, they're selling them'. And at that time, now this is going back, they still had gas lamps in the closes in Glasgow and the syringe just went in and they could get the gas from it and put it through a milk bottle, put it through the milk, so they were getting their gas through milk.

JMW: So, looking forward, do you feel optimistic about the future of The Isle?

JB: I keep hoping, I keep hoping. We've done a lot, we're doing a lot, but we need young people to come in and do some of it. We took over the hall in 2008, we refurbished it, we've got a cinema in it, we do all sorts of parties and dances and receptions and, you name it, and we can get a bar licence when we want it and we've started planning for an annexe but instead of people saying 'Oh, good', 'Who are you employing to work in the whatever', 'Wait till it's built first', 'Will you be employing so and so and so and so?', 'Wait till it's built, nothing'll happen till it's built.' But they want it yesterday, but they don't want to do the work, and as you know there's an awful lot of bookwork and paperwork and toil and trouble in any of these things. We've still...the council agreed last September was it, that we could buy the hall for a pound but we still haven't got it.

JMW: Right.

JB: That's the sort of-

JMW: Well, do you feel there's any other subjects that I haven't asked you about that you feel you would like to say something about?

JB: Not really, I don't think so.

JMW: Well, that's been a comprehensive interview.

JB: I can tell you about the pigs (laughs).

JMW: Right.

JB: When the camp was in full flow my father put on two hundred pigs and they were fed on the pigswill from the camp.

JMW: Right.

JB: But you had to go through the swill looking for cutlery, razor blades, bread wrappings, because they put whole loaves in but they wouldn't take the wrapping off it. And you could only feed the pigs on that for a couple of years or there was a risk of them getting swine fever so you had to start the whole process over again with a new batch. But that was one of the other things we did in the war, to prevent waste.

JMW: Well, I'm sure the pigs were very popular.

JB: The pigs were very popular.

JMW: It sounds as if your father was very entrepreneurial?

JB: Well, he had some good ideas and yes, he...man's a thing was got off the shore too. Ships going down and...dried baby milk was one that came off a ship that went down out here and I think that half the people who are now my age at least had one tin of it (laughs) if not more.

JMW: Not quite *Whisky Galore* but kind of-. Right, well I think if there's nothing that you feel you want to say further.

JB: No, and please cut half of it out.

JMW: Ok.

JB: (Laughs).

JMW: Well, thank you very much, that's great.