

Interviewee: Kennedy Donnan (KD)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
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JMW: Go back to Falcumner, yes, sorry, you were saying?

KD: We had two or three calves while we were there and ah worked at Slahabert, that's near Whauphill, for a wee while. So, it think it was hard times then.

JMW: Yes.

KD: You went tae a dance at Whauphill on a Saturday night, ah got half-a-crown fae ma mother and it was one-and-six tae get in, she was lookin for the shilling change in the morning (laughter).

JMW: Is that right?

KD: It was very hard times then.

JMW: So, you milked twice a day when you were up at-.

KD: That's right, yes.

KD: And that was hand milking?

KD: Hand milking, yes.

JMW: No machines at all?

KD: After ah left home there was a machine put in.

JMW: Right, ok. Was it one of those sort of vacuum transportable milking machines?

KD: No, no, it was a right milking machine.

JMW: A proper milking machine?

KD: Yes.

JMW: Right. And so you made how many churns of milk in a day?

KD: In the peak it would be about four. Milk lorry came in every day, went tae Port William.

JMW: And that was to the creamery there?

KD: The creamery there, in Port William, yes.

0.01.34

JMW: And it was a lorry that came was it?

KD: That's right, yes, flat lorry.

JMW: Because prior to that presumably it was a horse and cart?

KD: True. When ah stayed down at ma sister's when ah'm gaun tae Whithorn school ah yaist tae take the horse and cart intae Whithorn creamery and bring it back afore ah went tae the school.

JMW: Goodness.

KD: Yes.

JMW: And so, you sold that to the creamery, was that the main farm income?

KD: Yes, it was.

JMW: And did you...you kept some for your own use and did your mother make any-?

KD: Made butter. Wasnae sae many rules then, you could skim cream off and make butter but ye cannae dae that nowadays.

JMW: No, no, I bet.

KD: No.

JMW: So what do you remember about Faldarroch, when do you remember that? How long ago?

KD: Oh boy. It would be in the '40s. Yes, and ye used to come down, we yist tae give Annie's brother a hand...where they dairy and that was up there, he built that and he built this, what was a bedroom in there.

JMW: Right.

KD: We gave him a hand to build them up, yes.

JMW: I can see at a certain point they must have brought a bit more technology into the milking because they had those extra buildings built.

JMW: That's right, aye, they had a machine, a diesel machine tae drive the milk machine, it's up at the Boreland.

0.03.22

JMW: Right.

KD: He shifted it up there, yes.

JMW: And do you remember the churns going into the milk house, is that what that was used for, the little milk house?

KD: Yes, aye, and the other bit was for washing up the churns and the milking machines.

JMW: So, clearly they didn't have a bathroom, did they just use the stream, is that how they-?

KD: Yes, they did, then there was a dry yin put up just at the right-hand corner where it would run into what was the stack-yard.

JMW: And do you remember that being full of stacks?

KD: Ah used tae gaun roond wi a mill tae thresh.

JMW: Right.

KD: There wasnae a lot of room tae get in round that corner there.

JMW: No, I wouldn't think so.

KD: And put the wee baler in front of it tae bale the strae up, yes.

JMW: So, when did you start with the mill?

KD: Oh boy, it must have been in the '40s tae, cause ah got the Boreland in the...'58 and we had quite a few years at the contracting.

JMW: Right. And can you describe, for somebody who doesn't know, how the mill worked?

KD: Well, ye had tae open it up...take the sheet off, open it up, get it ready for thrashing, two ladies come up, what ye called 'the lowsers', they cut the strings on the sheafs and handed then tae whoever was in the...was feedin the drum, and that was more or less what...some o them liked it bunched and others liked it baled.

JMW: Right.

KD: Yes, ah got the point of that finger stuck in the stationary baler (laughs).

JMW: Ow!

0.05.31

KD: And ah had tae wait till the [?] came back for to get it out (laughs).

JMW: So, how many clients did you have? How far did you travel?

KD: Up intae this area, yist tae go tae Killintrae, at Port William, down the Whithorn area. Ma brother, Jim, used tae take yin away up tae Drummore in the summertime, tae a chap up there. And more or less round locally.

JMW: And you bought the machine? It was your-?

KD: Yes, we bought them both.

JMW: You owned it. It sounds like quite an expensive thing to buy.

KD: Well, they werenae too expensive then, compared to what things is nowadays. Mine's was a second-hand yin, a [?], Jim's was a new yin, it was a Crichton.

JMW: And how was it powered, cause I know there are some old ones powered by steam.

KD: No, we had the tractors, they had a belt on them, put on a pulley and a belt on tae the mill.

JMW: So when you arrived at a farm it was quite a big day for the farm usually wasn't it?

KD: That's right, yes. Latterly ye had tae take a net wi ye, an run it out round where ye were workin for the sake o keepin rats in, so as they couldnae get away.

JMW: Right.

KD: And there was quite a few rats about then.

JMW: I bet there was (laughter).

KD: When ah was standin feedin the mill ah've felt mice gaun up roon ma waist here. Ah had a belt on, ah just gein them a squeeze (laughter).

JMW: Don't like the sound of it.

KD: Gien them a leg get kicked when ah got doon off the mill.

JMW: So, it was you and your brother...were both of you working the mill at the same time or did you have separate-?

0.07.26

KD: No, we were both on at the same time, when...if there was just one, it was maistly I went out, if there was two and ye didnae ken, he went out.

JMW: And then people on the farm would do the forking and-?

KD: That's right. Yes, ye had tae have a second man. One was working the baler and the other one was feeding the mill.

JMW: And so what did you charge the farms, what was the fee for...or did it depend how many stacks they had?

KD: No, it was sae much per hour.

JMW: Ok.

KD: Now, it was Mother that did up all the books. It wasnae very much.

JMW: No, no.

KD: Ah think it was maybe a pound an hour.

JMW: Right.

KD: It could hae been a little more, I'm not just sure.

JMW: And was it considered a good living or was it just a kind of bare living?

KD: No, a reasonable living, a reasonable living.

JMW: I suppose you got to know absolutely everybody if you were going round the farms, you must have known every farm?

KD: Yes, aye, some folk ye had tae go tae collect yer money (laughs).

JMW: Ah, right.

KD: Yes. One farm ah went, he wasnae payin an ah went tae...we were takin corn in place o money and there were a hundred and half bags. An oh dear, he never looked near me, ah had these to load maself, ah'm telling ye, he put me intae ma boots. Yes, some o them, maist o them when ye went...nae problem payin ye.

JMW: And so where did you keep your mills, where did you-.

KD: Cherry Valley, where ma sister was.

0.09.16

JMW: Ok.

KD: There was a bit up, jist off the main road but we had plenty room tae draw them in.

JMW: And was that all year round did you do that work?

KD: No, just in the wintertime.

JMW: Ok.

KD: Then there was a combine bought, for combining in the summertime.

JMW: Right.

KD: Ah was never very much on it, it was just the yin. Jim maistly did that.

JMW: And do you remember, before you were of working age, do you remember the horse-drawn versions?

KD: Ah used tae work horse at (Slahabert?), aye, yes.

JMW: So, which horse-drawn machines did you used to operate?

KD: Used tae plough, drill, harrow and cutting hay, reaper. Aye, it was done on horses then.

JMW: So, at Faldarroch, were they working horses when you remember it?

KD: Yes, up until...only bought the tractor...it was sold at a sale...what dae ye caw these old fashioned tractors?

JMW: There's what, Fordsons or something like that.

KD: Aye but it was [?] at a sale at Glenluce, it was Betty's tractor, so the proceeds was tae go tae the church, so it made two and a half thousand. It was quite an old tractor, 1953, ah think it was. It was horse up until that.

JMW: So, which building did they keep the horses in?

KD: What you call the stable, not just the very end yin, the one next to it.

JMW: Right, ok.

KD: The bigger one, it was like a [?] end, the very end wi the tin roof.

JMW: Yep.

0.11.17

KD: It was the one next to it.

JMW: Ok.

KD: And then it was turned intae a byre later on, to put on extra cows.

JMW: Right, so when the horses went-?

KD: Aye, changed it intae a...for cows, four cows, and what was the turnip shed, the first yin on the left hand side here, it was turned intae a cows' shed tae.

JMW: So, by the end, how many cows did Betty have?

KD: Ten, fourteen, aboot twenty, aboot twenty.

JMW: And by then was it still Port William creamery or was it going-?

KD: Still Port William, yes, it was.

JMW: And so, did Betty take on the farm all by herself?

KD: She was away at [?], is that what ye caw it, a domestic school.

JMW: Oh yes.

KD: Up near Stirling.

JMW: Ok.

KD: And her uncle took ill and she came home to help her auntie. Wullie, her uncle, died and she stayed wi Maggie, Maggie took ill and she died, so we used tae come down and gie her a hand oot...and she sold off and come up tae Boreland wi us. She was there for forty year.

JMW: Goodness. Because she never forgot Faldarroch.

KD: No.

JMW: So, tell me about the water supply that...into Faldarroch, I can see there was once a well across the road.

KD: Aye, on the corner there, but then they got the council water in, water trough oot there and intae the back kitchen. But there were nae warm water or ocht, just the cold water. Yes, times were hard then.

0.13.19

JMW: Yes, I bet they were.

KD: Yes.

JMW: So, can you describe the house because it's obviously changed a great deal now?

KD: Oh well, when ye come in ye was intae the back kitchen, you were into the kitchen up there, noo there's a lobby. Come into first bedroom and ye come further doon the lobby intae a second bedroom, that was it.

JMW: Mm.

KD: Wullie used tae live in a wee shed, oot there, and then he built that brick one up at the back there.

JMW: And it was heated just with an open fire?

KD: Yes, it was. There yist tae be a fire down in the bottom bedroom tae.

JMW: Mm, it was probably needed.

KD: It wid, yes.

JMW: So, how did the tenants view Mr Cockrell, did they know him at all or was it a pretty distant relationship?

KD: Wullie and him didnae get on.

JMW: I see.

KD: Oh, no.

JMW: Right, uhuh.

KD: Ah think he chased him down the close one day (laughter).

JMW: Oh right, ok.

KD: Yes.

JMW: Was that because he felt that he didn't put repairs in to the property?

0.14.37

KD: Ah think so, ah think so, yes. When [?] come or...him and Mr Cockrell an me had a bit of an argument. The corner fell out o the building on the left hand side as ye go down, left hand...opposite the house.

JMW: Mm.

KD: Now, I had nothing to do wi it, just it fell doon there and he's gonnae get me to...charge me for rebuilding it ah had tae go tae a solicitor's. An ah went tae a solicitor, that was it, ah'll dae nothing more. [REDACTED]

JMW: So, can you tell me a little bit about the neighbours, because obviously this is quite a special area...these little farms are quite unique really.

KD: Yes. Well, Wullie Rooney, that was in Shed Park, he used to come down here at night, some nights, he would also give a hand to build his dairy and that and then you went to [?] was Alec Lynch, who had a daughter and son, Jenny and Billy, he was there for a long time and then you went to (Buckmuir?), it was Davy Rooney, ye went on by Davy Rooney's doon tae the other (Buckmair?) which was Johnny Hamilton, an auld man on his own, ah used tae gaun over and work tae Johnny.

JMW: Uhuh. That's a really remote property (Back Moor?), even now you've got to get out and walk for a bit and there's no proper road.

KD: That's right, no. The last time ah went up the (Buckmair?) road ah had tae let folk oot o the car...it was catchin the centre.

JMW: Yes, and in those days, presumably that forestry wasn't there?

KD: No, no.

JMW: So it would just be what? Moorland or...cause that's the start of the flow of Airriequhillart isn't it?

KD: That's right, yes, yes.

JMW: And did Johnny Hamilton do dairying as well?

0.16.48

KD: He did dairying, aye, he had to bring the cans out right to the main road.

JMW: That's a long way.

KD: It is that.

JMW: Mm.

KD: Yes, and if he spoke to onybody his horse just made the roadside tae get grass and he went up aff the seat trying to keep it off it (laughs).

JMW: And it was your, your mother at Barrachen Home Farm?

KD: Yes.

JMW: Right. And who was at Falcumner when you started?

KD: It was Wullie Rooney, he was in there before he got Shed Park, along wi his mother, Maggie Rooney. And we got it after Wullie Rooney went oot. And then when we left it, it was Fred Silver and Doris, he was Mr Cockrell's kinna gamekeeper, he came into it then. And he was in it for a...two or three year and then went away back doon tae England. And then he came back up again.

JMW: So, would you say the Barrachen Estate people were quite a community, did you all know each other?

KD: Quite friendly, aye, yes.

JMW: Because you seem to have visited each other and a lot of you kept in touch.

KD: That's right, yes, we did. Wullie Donnelly was in Shed Park afore Wullie Rooney went intae it. He had a horse broke on tae Davie Rooney's and when he went doon tae get it Davy Rooney was angry aboot gaun on tae him. 'Well' he says 'Ah don't know what ye come doon here for, there's nae grass for it' (laughter).

JMW: Now, when we spoke before, you told me something about playing the bagpipes in the byre.

KD: Ah did, yes, they were Davy Rooney's, there was three sets o pipes in the kitchen and his wife went tae the bedroom to sleep wi three sets o pipes going in the kitchen, yes.

Interruption.

0.19.11

KD: Ah think that's aboot aw ah can help ye wi.

JMW: I'll just resume it after that slight interruption.

KD: Very good.

JMW: So, yes, we were talking about the community at Barrachan Estate.

KD: Yes.

JMW: Was there a good deal of co-operation between the farms?

KD: Yes, they used to neighbour at mills...when the mills was in they used tae neighbours an aw [?] for the day.

JMW: Right.

KD: They did that.

JMW: And did you have much to do with Barrachan village?

KD: No.

JMW: You were very much a self-contained unit up here.

KD: That's right, yes.

JMW: Do you remember the flow of Airriequhillart when it was kind of open bog or-?

KD: Aye, ah used tae see it when ah went ower tae work tae Johnny Hamilton. Ah used tae go over and mow his corn for him, about three acre.

JMW: Right.

KD: An help tae lift it and tie it up (coughs), yes.

JMW: It must have been long days' work.

KD: It was, yes, it was that.

JMW: And what about the wild life up here, because there's still quite a bit?

KD: A red squirrel come crossed in front o me the day, comin through Barrachan woods, ah think.

0.20.47

JMW: Uhuh, yea.

KD: Aye it did that.

JMW: Yes, yes, they're still around.

KD: There wis squirrels when we were at Barrachan Hoose...quite a few of them then but the dogs used tae hound them, tae they went up the tree. They're a lovely wee animal aren't they?

JMW: Yes, beautiful.

KD: They are that, the grey's hae's taken over. Ah see there's a new squirrel in the paper last...this week, a black one.

JMW: Right. I haven't seen one of those.

KD: No, neither have I. Ye didnae have much time for nature when ye were younger, it's just when ye get older that ye appreciate nature.

JMW: You'd be too busy farming.

KD: Yes.

JMW: So, did Betty have any crops in?

KD: No, she maistly...hay.

JMW: Hay.

KD: Mostly hay, yes, mostly hay tae feed the cattle.

JMW: And what kind of cattle did she have?

KD: Ayrshire.

JMW: You don't see many of them now.

KD: No, they're dying out, they are that.

JMW: Yep, yep.

KD: It was Ayrshires we had when we went tae Boreland, we started off...ah had a cousin married tae a Ramsay fae Mill Isle and ah bought twenty-two cattle, cows and a bull off him, thirty-six pound a piece. We'd two heifers from Annie's father at Balfern and ah got two heifers fae home and a mill and a baler (laughs). That was ma lot.

0.22.30

JMW: That was a fair amount.

KD: Ah didnae get ma share o money till Jim married a wuman wi money (laughs). Yes.

JMW: How many years did you do the milling?

KD: Oh, it would be...it would be ten, twelve year I would say, started it in the '40s and then ah got [?] in '58, ah got married in '55.

JMW: Right. And what do you remember about staying in Whithorn?

KD: Well, ah jist...we went tae the school and jist tae gie a hand at the milking at the Valley when ah was there, it was hand milking at that time. And ah had tae dae odd jobs when ah went hame fae the school.

JMW: And who was at Cherry Valley?

KD: Ma sister and her husband, Jack Christie.

JMW: Right.

KD: Ma niece was saying she was speaking tae ye, Catherine Miller.

JMW: That's right.

KD: Aye.

JMW: Yes.

KD: Ah had her up on Wednesday, her and her daughter. Yes, she hasnae a guid way o getting about, eh?

JMW: Yea, yea, she's in a nice little place there.

KD: Yes, aye.

JMW: Pretty bit of Glasserton that.

KD: Yes.

JMW: And what do you remember about Whithorn School?

0.24.44

KD: It was Mrs Morton was one of the teachers, Mrs Henderson...we used tae...ah only got the strap once at Whithorn School.

JMW: That was probably quite a good going, was it?

KD: It was (laughter).

JMW: Because some would get it a lot.

KD: Carrying on gaun intae the school, ah didnae know the headmaster was behind me, so (smacking noise).

JMW: So, did you keep in touch with any of your Whithorn classmates?

KD: No, really. Well, a chap, Billy Hawthorn, he used tae work in Drapes, the ironmongers, in Whithorn (coughs).

JMW: Yes, I've recorded his wife, Greta.

KD: Oh yes, aye.

JMW: I've recorded her.

KD: Yes, we used to go down and visit them. Ah think ah [?] that Betty and Annie and me was down visiting and we were kinna saying goodbye, ah says 'Come up onytime we'll no be in' (laughs) she never, they never came back. Aye she does a lot for the community, Greta.

JMW: Yes, uhuh.

KD: She does that.

JMW: What were the classrooms like at Whithorn?

KD: They were fairly big, yes, they were fairly big classrooms.

JMW: And heated by fires?

KD: Couldnae tell ye that, ah don't know, ye didnae feel the cold sae much then when ye were younger.

JMW: Uhuh, yep.

KD: Ah'm no sure whether it was electric heating or no or coal heating.

0.25.57

JMW: And when you lived up here with your mother did you go into Port William much?

KD: Yaist tae go down tae booling tournaments, carpet bowling tournaments, that was about it. The vans used tae, the vans come roond tae deliver groceries, the butcher came round, ice cream van fae Wigtown.

JMW: Really?

KD: Aye. A fruit man, fae Wigtown, used tae come round.

JMW: So, really, you didn't have to leave the farms very much?

KD: No, really no.

JMW: Did you find you produced a lot of the food that you needed on the farm? Did you, did you...a lot of people didn't use as much money as they do now because they produced more by...for their own-?

KD: That's right, we didnae produce a lot. We had milk, we had poultry, we had eggs and poultry, we had a garden for vegetables, and that was about it. Whiles grew...we grew potatoes out in the field...and turnips, for the cows, and we used them for human use tae, swedes.

JMW: You said there was a box bed in here, in Faldarroch?

KD: A what?

JMW: A box bed with the curtains.

KD: Aye, in the kitchen, but latterly it was oot...and ah don't know if it would be Wullie or no but he went intae a shed oot there and then he built that wee one bedroom thing.

JMW: I suppose it was quite warm at least, if you had your bed in the kitchen.

KD: Yes, aye and the fire was aye on. There was aye peats cut every year tae, there's a peat stack just outside there.

JMW: Right, so where was the peat cut from?

KD: Where the water tank is. No the water tank, where the water trough is, in the Moss, first gate on your left going up the road.

0.28.14

JMW: Right.

KD: Yes.

JMW: And did you all cut peat from there or was it just Faldarroch?

KD: Just mainly Faldarroch, it was that.

JMW: Was that part of Faldarroch land at the time?

KD: Yes, it was, yes.

JMW: Ok. And tell me about cooking with peat. Did you say earlier you'd seen-?

KD: Aye, Maggie, aye, it was a big hearth, put peat on and when she put shortbread or that on she had a...what de ye ye caw it...tongs and nipped oot a red peat, or a couple and put them on top o the lid...it would cook that much quicker. And then the swee tray, when she was cooking onything wi pots or ocht she hung it on the swee tray and then swung it roond on tae the fire.

JMW: So, who cut the peat because that's a heavy job?

KD: Wullie.

JMW: Right.

KD: Ah yaist tae gie him a hand because ah wisnae busy.

JMW: And was there a special tool that you used?

KD: Yes, yes. It cuts it about that length. Ye [?] push it in the breast and then break it off and take it away, put it intae a barrow, maybe put twelve or that onto it, took it intae the Moss a bit and tipped it intae a lump to let them dry. After a bit ye set them up against each other so as they'd dry better, then ye went on horse and cart and built them intae a horse and cart and then brung them into the stackyaird. It was quite a bit of work.

JMW: Yes, I bet.

KD: Yes.

JMW: And was that the main fuel that you used at Faldarroch?

0.30.11

KD: At one time, yes, ye used coal tae at times. It was coal latterly and stopped using the peat. Aye, it was quite heavy work cutting peat.

JMW: Yes, I'm sure.

KD: When it was wet, everything was wet.

JMW: Was there much peat cutting in the area or was that quite unusual?

KD: I think it was quite unusual.

JMW: I've heard of it up at Elrig but that was the only other place, well, there's still peat of course, where the Walkers are. What is it called? Where Harry Walker is?

KD: Balcraig?

JMW: Yes.

KD: Aye, he used tae sell peat, he did that. Ah think they're against peats being cut noo are they no?

JMW: I think so.

KD: Same as the compost.

JMW: That's right.

KD: Yes.

JMW: Well, do you think there's anything that you-

KD: I've missed?

JMW: -wanted to say that I haven't asked you?

KD: No, really, ah don't think really. Ah think that's as much as ah know.

JMW: Well, thank you very much for doing that.

KD: Ye're welcome now. Ah had tae help.

JMW: Ok.