

Interviewee: Marion Sunderland (MS)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
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JMW: My name's Julia Muir Watt and it's the 24th of April and I'm in Whithorn, and I'm interviewing Marion Sunderland. So, do you just want to tell me how your family came to be here?

MS: Yes... I'm pretty certain it was 1935, my mother had applied for the job as headteacher of Castle Kennedy primary school, came down all the way from Glasgow, I think, and didn't get the job. But they offered her the job of the Isle of Whithorn primary school, and she said, no thank you, I don't want to live on an island! 'Oh, it's not an island, why don't you try it?' So she said she would try it for a year or two. And that was that!

JMW: And here you are...

MS: Yes. I think she was quite shocked by the cobbled streets, and the houses... No running water, and things like that.

JMW: Right, right. So how old was she then?

MS: She'd be about thirty, I think, approximately. One of the reasons for wanting to live in the country was my father had been in a Prisoner of War camp in Germany for four years, he had been on an oil tanker captured in the Indian Ocean, by the [?1.28], I think, so she thought if she moved to the country there would be less rationing, which is true... I mean, the eggs weren't rationed around here I don't think. So that was why they came. And she was head teacher, then, of the Isle of Whithorn school until it closed. My father started a garage, a small car repair business behind the sailing club, but I don't think he was a very good businessman. So he went back to sea as a chief engineer in the Merchant Navy. And did that until he was too old to work. So that was the story of how we came.

JMW: And did you live on the main street in the Isle, or...

MS: Yes. I was born in what was called the Schoolhouse, opposite the church. And that actually belonged to the Education Authority, that house. It was a strange house, because if you look at it, anyone who's in the village, it looks as if it's been one house. So actually the two houses share the middle window. So you could talk to your neighbour by looking sideways through the middle window, there was a gap! Really strange. But yes, we lived there until my mother bought a house nearby, when I was about seventeen. But by then I was going to university, so I wasn't so bothered about the actual house we lived in.

JMW: And the Isle of Whithorn school, that's the one up through the gap between houses, is it?

MS: The Isle of Whithorn School, originally children just went there until they left school, I think, I believe my mother taught fourteen year old girls when she first went there. I seem to remember her saying she had a battle with the girls, because there were dances in the village on a Friday night, would come to school with their hair in curlers! Getting ready for the village dance. Because there were a lot of Polish men living at Burghhead, my mother in fact had an extra job teaching them English, so she was teaching English as a foreign language too. The Polish, I don't know what

they were, soldiers, airmen, at Burghhead.

JMW: So they were still there?

MS: They were still there, yeah. I don't remember them, but when I was a child there were quite a few Polish families in the Isle, Polish men had married village girls and stayed on. None left now, 04.18

but ... There was a Kajawolski in my class, and a Marie Kopiec, spelt K O P I E C, I think. They've left, but there was certainly at least two families, integrated, the men had married and stayed. But I don't really have any memory of people at Burgh Head.

JMW: So your mother was head teacher, how many staff were there apart from her?

MS: Another one! There was the infant room, and the big room, and that was it. In the middle we had the dinner room, and by the time I was leaving primary school I think we were actually getting indoor toilets for the children. I was one of the lucky ones actually. At dinner time, when everybody else went out to play, I nipped in and used the teacher's toilet! Perk of who I was. So I don't think I ever really used the outside toilets. Pretty awful. And it was a two-teacher school, I suppose, until Mrs McEwan died, Mrs McEwan who taught me and the infants was an aunt of John McWilliam, her brother was John's father, her brother Methven, whom I never really knew because he'd died in the early 1950s. Methven McWilliam was Etta's brother. But Etta I think was divorced, and had no family, and she came back to teach in the Isle with my mother, and I seem to remember... It was quite a big school, I think there were about eleven or twelve in my primary seven, much bigger than it ended up as, but there were bigger families, of course. Mrs Young had about eleven or twelve children. There were other big families as well. That's the one I particularly remember. Cause I actually remember, just, that they lived in more or less a hovel on the main street, on the right hand side going down, where I think there's an anchor now, and a bit of garden. Their house was there. And I think... And I'm sure this is memory, they were so poor the children had no shoes, I think my mother gave them cast offs, but only two of us and lots of them, some of them younger than me. And there were no floorboards and no stairs because they had burnt them for firewood. The Isle was very, very poor when I was young. Unbelievably so. You know, the difference even in ten years was amazing. I think when they built Boya Crescent, things changed there. But the poverty was dreadful. I do remember children with no clothes, rags, really. So I think the school dinners were a blessing then, even if it was butterbean soup!

JMW: There would still be rationing, obviously, into the fifties...

MS: Yeah. I don't know how much it affected us, really. There was a butcher's, of course, there was Mr Hailes the butcher, I think if you had money you could buy things, really. I think maybe the only way children... and we didn't know, of course, we didn't know that life had been different. When you're born into that... if you're born when there's no sweets in the shop, well, you know, you don't know about all these sweets and ice lollies and things like that. I suppose ice lollies are only becoming more available... I do remember ice lollies coming into McWilliam's... this memory of ice lollies, when they arrived on the scene! Banana ice lollies!

JMW: Right, that was quite sophisticated.

MS: Aye, I mind Tommy Huxtable and I ate three one day! Don't know where we got the money! Oh no, I used to... I was quite enterprising I suppose, we'd collect sticks on the shore, and bluebells in the woods, and sell them round the doors.

JMW: Young enterpriser.

MS: To parents, of course, parents and friends!

JMW: So you were taught by your own mother, effectively?

9.24

MS: Yes. Primary four to primary seven, yeah.

JMW: Did that give you a bit of status, or did it give you problems?

MS: Oh no, no... I don't think it was either, actually. No. Well, I suppose, as I said, I did use the teacher's toilet. But ... I don't think anybody minded, or cared. Well, why not, it's her mother, you know.

JMW: So it was quite integrated despite the fact that some people were quite poor?

MS: I think so. And a lot of the very poor families, they were mostly older than me. The poverty was receding. Funnily enough most of the people who were at primary school with me have gone. There are very very few of my generation left in the village. Very few, who actually have lived there all their lives. Alistair Gamble, and myself, and I can't think of anybody else really, of that particular age, really, who's been there all the time. Many of them left and I presume made their fortune. I think quite a few emigrated. Some of the Youngs went to Canada, a lot went to England, obviously, there were jobs there.

JMW: And presumably the catchment area included the surrounding countryside until you got, presumably into Whithorn's catchment area?

MS: Very small. The same as the community council catchment area, it's very, very small. Port Yerrick children came to Whithorn school. The whole of Burgh Head. Anybody living up at Burgh Head, at Cuckloy they came to the Isle, obviously. But in these days there was no such thing as school transport. I mean, I remember Caroline Mills having to... she was just a wee bit older than me, but whatever the weather was, if she was gonna come to school she had to walk from Burgh Head, from Cuckloy. There was no such thing as, she had no transport and that was that. She was just born at a time when there was nobody with a car around I suppose, and if the farmer's children had been old enough or whatever, she might have got a lift down, but otherwise, they weren't, so ... It was a case of you went to school, I suppose, when the weather wasn't too bad. It was a long walk...

JMW: It's an awful walk, yeah...

MS: When she was five! And then going to Douglas Ewart, the Douglas Ewart bus left here, left the Isle, in these days, at ten to eight. It was a minibus. So we'd to be up and about, to be in the village for ten to eight. If you'd had to walk... two three miles, practically impossible. Yeah, the Ewart, in these days, there weren't so many went to the Douglas Ewart, obviously, so it was a minibus from the Isle, and then you got the bus from Whithorn at the station, initially. Went down to the station, the trains were still running. Well, the goods trains were still running, it was that stage, so you went down to the station and got the bus there.

JMW: So those who didn't go to the Ewart, did they finish at fourteen?

MS: When I was young, yes. But by the time I was in primary seven and going to the Ewart, they went to Whithorn School. So most people, because you had an exam to sit aged eleven, most people went to Whithorn School.

JMW: And was there, I mean, there'd be farmer's children and village children, was there much of a distinction between the two or did they mix fairly well?

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MS: Oh, they mixed fairly well, I think, apart from those who went to boarding school! And that was them, you know... I'm sure Judy would say the same, once they went to boarding school they really, that was them gone. They didn't integrate so much when they came back.

JMW: And was that common for the better off farming families?

MS: Fairly. I'm trying to think... No, maybe not common, but certainly I know of quite a few who went to boarding school.

JMW: Would you say more than now?

MS: Yeah, I think more than now. But then nowadays children have the choice. Probably then if a child was told you were going to boarding school you went, you know. Now, I know of children I taught who just said, no, I'm not going to boarding school, or yes, I wouldn't mind going. Whereas fifty years ago I don't think anybody asked them.

JMW: No, no, certainly not.

MS: Do what you're told!

JMW: So, what do you remember of the curriculum when you started school? You can obviously compare it with the modern curriculum, so...

MS: Oh, there were none of the falderals! It was very very much reading, writing, arithmetic, very much so. Primary six was geared to passing the intelligence test. The intelligence test was this, I think you only sat it in primary six, I'm no quite sure, might have been primary seven. But I remember all these codes you had to break, and work out, and things like that. And dreadful things that you just learnt, like 'butterfly is to wings as fish is to, I don't know, fins...' Very useful! But the days when I was at primary school, that was in the days before topics or projects or anything, or

environmental studies... That's not to say we didn't do any, I mean, on good days you were on the beach. It was a great school to be at primary school, it was wonderful. You think of where it was, you know, on the shore, right there on the shore. It was absolutely fantastic. Because of course you were allowed to go on the shore... You weren't supposed to go on the shore on high tides, because there's what we call the Island, that's the back shore, or the [stinking port ?16.24] or whatever you care to call it. And on high tides you could be marooned on the island until the tide went out, unless you cared to get rather wet. So you weren't supposed to go on the island in high tides, but my brother, who was four years older than me, thought that was a great way of not going to school in the afternoon, if you could manage to get marooned on the island. My mother would just tell him to wade, paddle, get wet, get back here! But it was a great place to play, it really was. We played in the playground, as well, but practically everybody went on the shore, so... Even if you had shoes, what state they would be in! It was wonderful. And then we had maybe a monthly visit from the PE advisor. Especially in the summer he liked coming down from Stranraer to the Isle, and he would take us outside for PE or whatever it was called then. And maybe a monthly visit from the Art advisor. There were no peripatetic teachers, Mr McLucas would come every month, or Peter Brown would come maybe every month, because ... but not in the winter so much, I think they liked to come to the Isle in the summer! We had no music, because this was in the days before Mrs Niblock came to the Isle, when she married Jack. So we did singing together, eleven o'clock on Monday mornings. From the radio! I don't know when that finished. My husband still remembers singing together, and he's older than me... I loved it. Because really it did seem to be very basic work. Probably stood us in good stead, of course. I know my apostrophes.

18.34

On a Friday afternoon my mother would let us paint if we had done all our work. So I do remember once having an argument with her, I hadn't done all my work but I want paint! Muttering so nobody else could hear me. It's not fair! And swimming of course, my mother was a qualified swimming teacher. So everybody my age, and probably... certainly until she retired she was still teaching swimming. It was great.

JMW: And was that in the sea?

MS: Yeah.

JMW: You probably wouldn't do that now cause of ...

MS: Oh, we wouldn't be allowed to, no! No, probably not. Difficult even to take them for a paddle nowadays I think. No, I think practically everybody would learn to swim.

JMW: Which is a pretty good thing in a seaside village.

MS: It was great, it really was great. Because I assume she was teaching it anyway, but 1953ish... round about 1953 one March my mum and I were going out, it was a Sunday afternoon, it was very very stormy, very high tide, my mother and I were going for a walk up the Cairn, the headland promontary, and Matthew Lochhead said there were children up the cairn, Mrs Johnstone! He'd been walking his dog. So my mother thought she'd better go and see, make sure everyone was okay. This was absolute pure chance, got there, and up to the slipway on the cairn, and there was

a boy in the sea. Children came running, it was Florence Fisher I think, came running, Mrs Johnstone, Mrs Johnstone, Frank is in the sea! My mother took some clothes off, threw them at me, and jumped in, rescued him, I'm left there age five thinking, will I ever see my mother again?! There ye are, I remember that!

JMW: Yes, I bet you do!

MS: And I remember, oh, she saved Frank and she slapped him, gave them all a row. There was a collection for her to get her new clothes, and she got a parchment, I've still got it, from the British Humane Society. But my absolute thought was, my mum's gonna drown, you know, never mind Frankie! I actually met Frank, he was back in the Isle a couple o years ago. He died, actually, last year.

JMW: Well, a lot later than he might have done.

MS: Yeah, a lot later, yeah. Frankie McGuire. Of the McGuire family.

JMW: And was accident at sea something that you were aware of as a child, was it something that happened, people talked about?

MS: No. No, because there really hadn't been anything... and there was nothing just before my lifetime, I don't think... other people might be able to tell you. I think there was a regatta accident, but that might have been a hundred years ago or so, I can't remember. But historically something did happen. But I don't think it was a big event, really, in the Isle very often, that kind of thing. Probably been more recently...

JMW: And what about discipline in the school, that must have changed quite a bit ...
22.33

MS: I think to have been a head teacher's son must have been absolute misery. Unless you were the perfect child of a head teacher, it must have been dreadful. And I've seen it, actually, I've seen it not only my mother with my brother, but ... I know Mrs Brockie was like that with Ian Brockie. I know in my own time of teaching there was a male teacher who was very hard on his son. It must be awful for the boys. I think if you're the good pupil anyway it's quite nice having your mum as a teacher. There was a lot of ... there was physical punishment, yes, and it was pretty awful. I'm not saying the children were punished unfairly, but the method of punishment... I never agreed with corporal punishment. I think it's wrong. How can you possibly teach children to be kind and caring, and yet you hit them? No. Having said that, when I was a young teacher, it was what you did, and I did use the belt a couple of times. But I really did not like doing it, so when I was teaching primary seven in Whithorn, and there was a junior secondary school there, I used to get out of it by sending pupils to the deputy headmaster, not the headmaster, who, at the time... The headmaster at the time really probably should have retired. But we had one or two deputy head teacher at Whithorn Junior Secondary who were good, fair men actually, but didnae seem to mind the corporal punishment the way I did.

JMW: Was it the belt that was used?

MS: Just the belt, yes. Yeah. *Just* the belt. I've actually still got one, I think it was Mrs McEwan's. She was an infant teacher. I don't know if she ever used it, I never actually saw her using it I don't think. I do remember she rapped me across the knuckles with a ruler once. I don't know what I'd done, I'd be about five, don't know what I did. The only other corporal punishment I got was an English teacher once threw a piece of chalk at me. My misdemeanour was copying somebody else's work. But I'm very glad that corporal punishment stopped.

JMW: And what about the status of a teacher in the community, was that quite a high ranking position?

MS: Yes. I think to a certain extent it maybe still is in this area. But yes, I think it was, the teacher and the doctor and the minister were the ones that probably had some status in the village. They were certainly the ones with the phone and the car. And you know, everybody knew, oh, she's got a phone, or you can use their phone in an emergency.

JMW: So I suppose at that time the Isle was, as it were, a complete microcosm, it had a doctor, it had a teacher, it had a... whereas now it's lost...

MS: Yeah, and several shops. Quite a few shops. There was Donaldson's, Trews, William's, obviously, that was the butcher's... The milk was delivered daily from the back of a van, churned, you would go out to Andy and say 'one pint please Andy,' in your three pint jug, and you got three pints anyway, ye only paid for one pint! And ... apart from the lack of, believe it or not, fresh vegetables... which you didn't know about anyway, cause you didn't know that there were other vegetables out there, it was fairly ... As I said, if you had the money, you could probably live quite well. If you didn't mind that the only vegetables in the winter were turnips and carrots. Green vegetables didn't seem to have made their way to the Isle. Well, I suppose they didn't last long, that'd be why. ... Lost the thread...

JMW: Well, on the subject of shops and things, was the Steam Packet and the Queens, were they both working at the time, or do you not remember?

MS: Oh yes, of course they were. The Queens, when I was a young child, was owned by a couple
27.47

who had a disabled son. He was in my class when I was three. I went to school when I was three, in my mother's room, because she couldn't find anyone to look after me, or something like that. Whatever. Yes, the Queens I think was a pretty run down, ramshackle place. It's always the same Packet. ... No, I don't know of anybody else on the Isle... The Steam Packet was owned by Jimmy Robertson and his sister Jessie, who also owned the castle, and most of that row in front of the castle, I think. And Jimmy and Jessie ran a cosy establishment... It was probably quite warm, but it certainly wasn't very clean! I don't think any of them did food in these days, it was just a pub. And they had lots of mangy spaniels called Whisky and Brandy, etcetera, etcetera.... And they must have owned the Steam Packet until maybe eight, ten, I think... And I presume when they died that was when Colonel Brown took it over, or bought it, and a Mrs Dickson, his friend... friend, came to run it. So it changed then, they put in the big windows etcetera. But of course children certainly didn't go into pubs. At all. Ladies certainly didn't go into either of them. We used to go out on a Sunday if my dad was at home, or when he was ill, we used to go out on a Sunday, because of

course you couldn't have alcohol unless you had driven somewhere! Bona fide travellers could have a drink, so my father would take us somewhere so he could have a drink on a Sunday, and drive home! How times change!

JMW: That's right, absolutely.

MS: So we used to go to Garlieston for afternoon tea... Well, we'd have afternoon tea, I presume, and my father could have a whisky or a beer or whatever he wanted. And drive home again. How times change!

JMW: So the quay beyond the Steam Packet, what did that look like, cause I'm under the impression there were more buildings than there are now? Or at least things have changed a great deal?

MS: Yeah, it was Wyllie's warehouses all the way down, really. And I remember lorries going up and down with grain, they were certainly used as grain storages. And yes, where the bottom car park is now, you'll see from photographs, there were buildings all the way to there, and there was only a pathway to go up the cairn, you couldn't... a vehicle couldn't go up it, a bike could but not a vehicle. So yeah, there were sheds all the way down there. But I don't remember anything other than Wyllie's grain stores using it. And one of the sheds near the bottom must have been fairly empty because boats were stored in it in winter. I had a beautiful yellow rowing boat. Well, it was yellow by the time I lost it. And the beautiful rowing boat, clinker built, on the Clyde. And of course you didn't insure your boats when they were out of the water. And the first storm we had, my boat was in the shed down the harbour and the shed doors were battered off by the storm and the sea, and my boat was smashed to pieces. And it wasn't insured! So I never got another one the same. I got a glass fibre thing after that, but it wasn't the same as a clinker built dinghy. Which I had got because my brother had got a yacht, and I said I'd like a dinghy. So my father was friendly with Jimmy Brown, Judy's dad, and his tender for his yacht was this small clinker built ... so I got one the same. Loved it.

JMW: Do you remember storms and flooding during your childhood or early adulthood?

MS: I only remember that storm, when Frankie, when mum rescued Frankie because of that. There must have been more storms than that though, but that was bad in that I remember the sea was over the bottom of the harbour. I certainly remember the first big storm we had when the harbour was pretty much destroyed, or it was rubble. But then the harbour had been in a mess anyway. And the army came in to rebuild it. But I don't know if that was the first one, I'm not very sure. Certainly the

33.10

big storm of 1962, or whatever it was, sixty-one, sixty-two, we were still in the schoolhouse, and the sea came in and right under the floorboards. And because it was rock underneath, didn't really go out. We had to live upstairs for six months, and it was horrendous. The smell of seaweed under the floorboards was awful! I don't know how we coped, to be honest, because that was October when it happened, and it took about six months to get flooring, new floorboards downstairs etcetera, and remove all the rubble, whatever it was. I do remember it being quite uncomfortable, us upstairs living.

JMW: And McWilliams' shop, that's a bit of an institution, it would have been in full swing when you were there...

MS: It was wonderful. If you'd any money you could get broken biscuits! I don't suppose there were sweets, I can't remember, but I certainly remember that broken biscuits were cheap. You'd buy them in a bag from Peggy. Yeah, McWilliams' shop was good. Yeah, McWilliams' shop was great, great place.

JMW: Was it slightly more straight, on the the straight than I remember it?

MS: I don't think it was, to be honest...

JMW: It was leaning already?

MS: It'd probably still be standing there leaning if they'd left it alone, really! That was the biggest catastrophe of the Isle, really, it should never have been moved, never have been knocked down. Sure something could have been done. But there you are.

JMW: So which McWilliam was running it then?

MS: John's mother. When I was young, John's mother helped by ... Mary Hunter, who lived just up the road from there, and Mrs Young, I think worked there quite a lot as well, I think. And Matthew Lochhead, who lived across from the shop, and I think John... well, when I was younger, John was away at boarding school, so Matthew worked in the shop and did deliveries. Did a lot of deliveries to the farms. Still did, even before they closed, I think. The farmer's wives would just put in an order, a sort o weekly order, get it delivered, pay the bill at the end of the month, and, well, some people... I'm not saying the farmers' wives, but I know some people didn't pay the bill... Difficult, really quite difficult for the shopkeepers. But when I was younger as well, Mrs Donaldson's was a tiny shop, up at the top, opposite to bowling green. Go into the house and on the left was the shop, that was it. My mother and I used to go there on a Friday because she didn't want to do all the shopping at McWilliams', so we'd go there on a Friday evening and do some shopping in Mrs Donaldson's and then go through the back for a cup of tea when she shut the shop. A social occasion!

JMW: Yes. And was that a general grocer's, or ...

MS: Yes, yes, but I don't think they had the same stock as McWilliams' had. And the taxi service as well, Louie Donaldson had a taxi, if I remember rightly. A car, you know, b ut that was the taxi. Which is more than we've got now! And there was, the post office moved around, it was in several houses. But McWilliams', I suppose was the main shop, because they sold, well, everything. Everything it was possible to buy in the Isle you could buy at McWilliams'.

37.30

JMW: And did Isle people largely shop in the Isle?

MS: Oh yes.

JMW: They didn't travel out...

MS: They couldn't, really! No, as I said, it was only the professional people who had a car. And the farmers. No, the shopping was pretty much done in the village. We would go to Glasgow... certainly, we used to go to Glasgow, a group to Glasgow in October to do Christmas shopping, and I remember the excitement of a [Gammidge's 38.03] catalogue coming in! My mother would buy clothes from Derry and Tom's in London, that was mail order as well. But then of course, she had a dressmaker as well. So we would go on the bus, she didn't drive when I was very young, we would go on the bus to this dressmaker's in Newton Stewart, and make sure you had the winter dress.

JMW: Yes. Was dressing properly part of being a teacher, was that... a bit of a requirement?

MS: I think it was, yes. And she was a city girl. That's the difference, I think!

JMW: So she would look quite smart compared to...

MS: Yes, high heels to work! Gorgeous red peep-toe shoes. They were lovely. She had a red and white striped shirt, with the red peep-toe shoes to match it, that's one of the outfits that I remember quite a lot, sort of the fifties clothes.

JMW: But as it was a junior school I presume they didn't wear gowns?

MS: No, no. But I think, having come from the city, certainly when she was younger, you know, interested in being smart and fashionable.

JMW: Yes, yes. And what about the fishing in the Isle? Because presumably that was reasonably active...

MS: Oh, the trawlers... It was great. Friday nights the trawler would come in, there would be twenty or thirty, all BA registered, so from Ballantrae, Ballantrae registered, mostly from Girvan. They must have had transport to go home to Girvan for the weekend. But I do remember that, you know, you could walk over the trawlers about six deep in the harbour. It was quite amazing the number of trawlers we got in. So yeah, the fishing... they must have offloaded the catch in the Isle, must have gone on lorries, how refrigerated they were I don't know! But they must have. Actually, for big trawlers, there was a lot. As far as local fishermen go, can't remember.

JMW: Were they trawling for herring?

MS: Mmm. Yes, I don't know if scallops were profitable as anything then, in these days, I don't remember ever eating scallops at all. And they must have, obviously there would be local fisherman doing lobster etcetera. I suppose even in these days the lobster would go south. By the time I was a teenager I think the value of lobster was realised when Nonny came to the Steam Packet, I think that was when the lobster salads would start, then. But it was reasonable then, and you could go to the Steam Packet for lobster salad, that was it. Got the half lobster on your plate.

Served by a lady called Jeannie Graham in her big wellies. Jeannie just wore her wellies! Jeannie 41.31

and Mrs Wilde worked for Nonny and Mrs Graham just wore the wellies.

JMW: And was fish quite a part of the diet in the Isle because of the proximity of the sea, or not particularly?

MS: I think it may have been if you couldn't afford anything else. Strangely enough, and I still find it strange, fish van came round every Tuesday. Still does, it comes at tea time now. Davie Doughty's fish van. [...] Davie's fish van would come round every Tuesday. I know that distinctly because in these days I couldn't stand fish.

JMW: So if you had the money it would be meat, would it?

MS: Yeah. Meat, eggs and probably macaroni cheese, caulifloer, staple food. Never anything fancy. And every child had school dinners. The school dinners were sent from Whithorn in big canisters. I'm not saying they were appetising, but they fed you!

JMW: Yes. And that was perhaps important in some ...

MS: I think it was very important for a lot of children. And, I mean, there were free dinners by then, but whether there always had been I don't know, but certainly quite a few children got free dinners.

JMW: And was there open fires at the school?

MS: Yes. Yes, the open fires, the infant room only had one fire place, and Etta always put her desk in front of it, so it was quite cold! My mother's room had a fireplace at either end, so you were warm in primary seven, and you were warm in primary four, but in primary five and six, it was ruddy quite cold in the middle of the room! So, the mad dash for primary seven! Yes, coal fires had to be stoked, shovelled, there was a big boiler. No, the [?43.47] came afterwards, of course, that was the central heating. No, it was coal fires. Again, I think the central heating came in just when I was leaving, so ... Around 1958 or so, when they got the indoor toilets, I think they got the central heating!

JMW: And how did your mother cope with all those different age groups at the same time?

MS: Well, I suppose the same way as anybody copes in Garlieston school nowadays, really! I'm not sure about the teaching of the fourteen year olds as well, I just don't remember that, but there definitely were some that age initially. It works quite well, it works well enough, so long as you don't have, I think, any more than about twenty children. That's, I think, enough thank you! In a way that system's okay because the bright child can work with the older children and vice versa. It's not as difficult as you might think.

JMW: And do you remember seafaring people in the Isle, old sea captains, that kind of person, even if retired?

MS: I only remember Captain Weaver, who lived in Harbour House, on the bottom of the harbour, but he died when I was quite young. I used to still go in and see Mrs Weaver, his widow. Cause Mrs Weaver made rhubarb and ginger jam. And they would go in for a cup of tea quite often anyway, because there weren't so many children living at the bottom of the village, but I think we were in and out of all the houses all the time. Anybody who wasn't your mother was your auntie, auntie so-and-so or whatever. But I used to go into Mrs Weaver's for a chat. And she would give me the 46.19

rhubarb and ginger jam for my mother, every year. In fact, when the contents of their house were being sold, I bought one of Captain Weaver's sea chests, with the rope handles, and I've still got it. I thought, I don't want everything to go and be forgotten, so I've still got one of his sea chests. Weighs a ton. And I was talking to Jack Niblock on Saturday night, and Jack said there were two, he's got one of them. So he's got the other one. Jack's other was a Weaver, so Captain Weaver's... Jack's mother was Captain Weaver's sister, yeah. But seafaring, he's the only one I remember... there was nobody else seafaring actually lived in the bottom of the village, there had been others, Jake's grandfather was a Captain Rob, there are various Weavers, captains, etcetera. And of course McWilliams were builders. I think, of course, there were quite a few Isle men who left to go and seek their fortune elsewhere. Unless you were a farmer, mostly you had to go to find employment. Still the same.

JMW: Quite. And post-war, was it noticeable that some men had perished and didn't come back, was that a feeling in the Isle, or not particularly?

MS: I don't know, sorry. You don't know these things as a child. I don't personally know of anyone who lost family in the war.

JMW: There were many in reserved occupations, like farming and forestry...

MS: Yes, there were. Although if you look on the war memorials, here and on the Isle, there are local names on, so obviously people perished. But, sorry, I can't help you on that one.

JMW: That's fine... And as regards holidaymakers, was the Isle already somewhere you came to get by the sea, or...

MS: Oh, a holidaymaker was something new. Ooh look, strangers! Strangers were, and holidaymakers were, so unusual... You would get to know them, actually. Because they didn't come for a day, they would come for maybe a fortnight, and I remember the first caravaners... I had never been in a caravan before, and I was swimming and met this girl down the harbour, having a swim, I think it was, and she was living in a caravan on the cairn! So, had to see inside this caravan. And it was Sue Reidman, do you know Sue?

JMW: No.

MS: She would be about twelve or so. And they since then have bought houses etcetera in the village, and Sue lives in the village now. But these were the first tourists I remember now, these English people. For a start, they were English! But apart from that... There was a boarding house,

Cressey was a boarding house, cause I remember friends of my mother coming down from Glasgow, staying in Cressey... But no, there weren't many tourists initially. It would be mid-sixties, I think, before any kind of tourism really started, at all. And people mostly have to have cars, to have a car, to get to the Isle. So there was that to it. Burgh Head, most people going to Burgh Head have a car. I remember once some poor souls getting off the bus with luggage. 'Oh, where are you going?' 'Burgh Head, is there a taxi?' '... No.' I took them there, I think. Three miles wi your suitcases! No, all the houses were occupied. That's a bugbear of mine. All the houses had somebody living in them, and they were mostly, I suppose, handed down from generation to generation. I suppose it would be in the sixties that people began to come in and buy houses for holiday houses as well.

JMW: As early as that?

51.23

MS: Yeah, mmhmm. Yes, because my husband's parents did. Although they had been coming... to be fair, their family had been coming to the Isle since the days of the Edwardian shooting parties. There used to be shooting parties at Knockenharry, and they would all arrive there in their big fancy cars, the men in their plus fours! But I would say, yeah, in the sixties, that's when tourism started. And certainly when it began to be a holiday village, you know. Empty except for Hogmanay and Easter.

JMW: And when was Burgh Head converted, as it were, to a holiday village?

MS: That would be in the sixties, I suppose. Eddie across the street, you know, it was his mother in law who did it, Audrey Simpson. Audrey and Tom I suppose got Burgh Head back after the war, and there were some tarmac roads done, obviously, and some buildings, so it would certainly be in the sixties because my first job ever was working at Burgh Head, about nineteen ... sixty-four, I think. Cause I wasn't old enough to drive, had to cycle up on a bike, cycle up to Burgh Head and in the morning I worked in the office, and in the afternoon I was a pool attendant, and in the evenings I washed glasses in the bar.

JMW: Right, varied!

MS: Yes. And it had a Chinese restaurant! Got that here, wonderful. So it may have been open for a couple of years before that, so maybe early sixties they opened up.

JMW: And did that economically benefit the Isle when it opened, did you get Glasgow Fair people?

MS: Yes, but they still tend to stay up at Burgh Head I think, yes. There was a bar there, even then,
54.02

there was a shop, I think... It might bring some benefit, and it does bring some benefit in that you'll have one or two ...[clock chiming 54.06...] but it's not of huge benefit, no. It still has some employees, I suppose.

JMW: Yeah. And do you remember Bisby Mill being in functioning state, or was it, it was all gone?

MS: No, I don't remember that at all. You'd need to have somebody older.

JMW: I think Jack Niblock remembered it, I was just curious to know.

MS: Jack's a bit older than me!

JMW: I know, that's why I was saying...

MS: No, I don't remember it, no. Not at all.

JMW: And what about, there was a girls' home, or something, from...

MS: Oh, I remember the Home girls. The Home girls came down every summer from Newton Stewart. I was quite friendly with one for quite a few years. Can't remember her name at all now. But yeah, I think they spent the summer there. I suppose they must have spent the summer there. But they were in Newton Stewart all winter, it must have been just the summer holidays I suppose.

JMW: Right. And were they orphans or...

MS: Yeah.

JMW: And where was the house in Newton Stewart that they...

MS: I don't know. I'd completely forgotten about them. Strange.

JMW: It must have gone on for a number of years. I've seen quite an old photograph, I mean, a long time before your time, of what appears to be a group of girls bathing at the Isle.

MS: Well, they were certainly coming in the early sixties. Because there was one girl I was friendly with who was also at the Douglas Ewart. So, yep... But I don't know where they all came from or what. Maybe I once knew, but memory goes.

JMW: And what about the impact of the church in the Isle, because you had your own church and minister then?

MS: I think the Church was probably more important than it is now. Most children I think went to Sunday School, my mother was actually the Sunday school teacher for the Isle so I had no choice! Quite a lot of us joined the church aged about sixteen, you would go up to the minister's house on a Sunday night for Bible study etcetera etcetera, and sixteen seems to have been the age when you joined the church. Maybe half a dozen, a dozen of us. I don't know, I can't remember. But, you know, sort of teenagers, we were called up then. You joined the church as a matter of course I think.

56.56

JMW: So you arrived at a fairly large congregation?

MS: Certainly bigger than... Yes, more than the twenty average that you might have got in latter years. And it was mostly Mr Cowie I remember. Although before that Mr Murray, and I only vaguely remember him. They used to come into school every so often as well, I think. And everybody was, if anything, Church of Scotland, because the Roman Catholic children came to Whithorn, because the priest came to Whithorn School. Well, the priest lived in Whithorn anyway. In Jack's house. So even Isle of Whithorn Roman Catholics came into Whithorn school. So funny enough, you didn't really know them so well, because they weren't in the same school as you. Some of the McGuires, I think. Yeah, because their mothers were Catholics. But I think the church probably had more of an influence than it does now. Probably.

JMW: And were the regattas a big thing in those days?

MS: Oh yes, yes. There was always a regatta anyway, and then when the sailing club was started in the fifties my mother was one of the founding members of the sailing club. And that began in the fifties, the sailing club started running the regatta, I think it was. And that was kind of when I remember, the greasy pole, as well as all the sailing races, and there were some wonderful boats then. I used to crew for Jake McGuire in the Janet Jane. And the Janet Jane was as wide as she was long. Beautiful big clinker built boat with, I think with brown sails, and my first crew was Jake, probably until he stopped sailing, I'd be around seven or eight. And every second word was a swear word with Jake. So I know all the swear words! And that was even at the very beginning of the sailing club, I don't think he was in the sailing club, particularly. The sailing club was all people who bought GP 14s, I think they decided to have a club boat, so they could race together, race against each other without having handicaps. But yes, the regattas were wonderful. Great day you had. Bill Lenachan the piper. He wasn't a very good piper, but Bill Lenachan was the piper! And there was swimming of course, and greasy pole, and there was also plate diving, it was tin lids I suppose, were thrown in. Because I remember Alistair Gamble was very good at plate diving. Excellent. Whereas I couldn't dive, we never ever dived properly, always annoyed me. Rowing races of course, outboard engine races, all that kind of thing. I think it was taken probably more seriously then than it is now, you know. Certainly the rowing and the outboard racing was quite serious events, I think. Maybe it was the money involved! It wouldn't be much money, it certainly wouldn't be much money!

But the regattas, I suppose because there wasn't much on, the regatta was a great day. Everywhere's got a gala nowadays, you know, there's galas and fairs and fetes everywhere, and they weren't so much then. When I was young we used to go to Port William regatta as well, don't know how we got the boats up. I suppose we would trail the boats on land, cause we had a boat trailer. I think the bigger boats sailed round. And Garlieston also had a regatta, as well. I remember swimming both at Garlieston and Port William harbours. Thinking, wouldna do that now! Although they're probably cleaner now than they were then. Yeah, the regatta was a big day. Bill Lenachan, yes, I remember... another event I remember was the coronation. The coronation celebrations. Because Bill Lenachan piped us up the village to a bonfire on Roses Brae. And it is where the bungalow with the red roof is now, on Roses Brae, we had a bonfire and possibly a barbecue, although it probably wasn't called that. And the piper Bill Lenachan was there as well entertaining us. And we had sports, we had sports that day on the field behind the school where the chalets stand now. We had a sports day there and all the children got coronation mugs, I think. So these are sort of early memories. Another, I was just thinking yesterday, another early memory, which is

not as early as I thought, is Alan
01.03.04

Faulds, who was buried yesterday, coming home from Korea. And I remember the flags being up in the bottom of the village and asking why, and it was this man coming home, I'd never seen, or certainly didn't remember. But I thought I was only about four, but apparently it was later than that. That's certainly one of my early memories, is celebrating Alan's homecoming from the Korean war. But there really wasn't so much entertainment then as there is now, probably. Oh, apart from the Basket Tea, have you heard of the Basket Teas? Wonderful things, a young teenager, 'Oh, you're allowed to go to the Basket Tea!' Because the WRI probably ran it, so it was all right. And you had entertainment, usually. And then the lady hostess would bring the tea, all beautifully done, out of her basket, and then that would be cleared away and there would be a dance. They were lovely, they made super events. Should bring them back! I remember Basket Teas in the Village Hall.

JMW: And what about children's games that you played in the playground?

MS: Possibly slightly different to now simply because we had the shore, you know, there was that extra dimension to it. We played a lot of make believe games, cowboys and Indians, strangely enough. But I certainly, and my friends, had this game where... I made a hut from the bit of rock, and you would always find bits of corrugated iron, sheets of corrugated tin or whatever it was from the shore, so you could make roofs and things, quite inventive. I actually had, I ran a pub, and I wouldn't let drunken trawlermen in! So there must have been drunken trawlermen around, otherwise how would I know?! But yeah, you played skipping, and hopscotch, football, rounders, you could always make sandcastles on the bit of front shore there near the church, the bit of sand there. There was the usual kick the can, chasie, tig. Certainly during the school day there were all these things. In the evenings, you swam in the summer, I suppose, and I had a boat, by the time I was eight. But there were only a few of us with bikes. The Huxtables, that's Tommy and Peter and Alec, had bikes. I had a bike. I think I was the only girl with a bike. I was certainly privileged. I was the only one with roller skates, which wasn't quite so much fun! I remember lending one skate to a friend! A skate each! Didn't really work! Certainly by the time I was a bit older, I don't know, eight or nine, the summer centered on the harbour and swimming. Sailing, rowing, whatever, that kind of things. Although I used to go for long cycle runs, Tommy Huxtable and I when I was maybe a young teenager would cycle quite a bit. But I don't really, I suppose that outdoor games are probably much the same as they ever were...

JMW: And what about the children's dress at school, I presume there wasn't a uniform when you started?

MS: No, no uniform. Just talking to Judy the other day, we both remember wearing skirts with a bodice that attached with buttons to the bodice thing, the skirt was attached with buttons. A sort of vest thing. No uniform, there was much more hand knitting, of course, a lot of the children had hand knitted clothes. Or hand sewn, even, my mother and aunts used to sew quite a lot. It's quite interesting, you look at old photographs, the girls have ribbons in their hair, and there's not this every girl has long hair any more, it's different hairstyles. But at the time, looking at school photographs, old school photographs of the Isle, everyone seems to have decent enough clothes, and shoes, but I do remember children without shoes, as I've said.

JMW: Was that in summer mainly, or was that just that they didn't have any?

MS: I think they just didn't have, or what they had was pretty awful. I think by 1954ish things were improving. I suppose Britain had just gone through a war as well, you know, there wasn't the money
01.08.57

around. But no, there was no uniform until... I don't think Whithorn had a uniform either, the junior secondary... When you went to the Douglas Ewart you had to have the proper uniform and in these days it was navy and red, and your blazer would be navy with red piping. It was quite smart actually. But you had to wear the white shirt and the tie then.

JMW: So you went on to the Ewart at the age of twelve? Eleven?

MS: I think I was eleven, yeah. A long haul on that bus from the Isle. We left at ten to eight and we got home at five. It was a long long day! It must have been worse for others, because my mother paid for us to have lunch in the Galloway Arms, so I never had a school dinner at the Douglas Ewart ever, I don't think. And the Galloway Arms was a haven at lunchtime, it really was. And not everybody's life was like that. But it was a long day, really was. Especially the buses then, I don't think they were heated. Really, it was... Must have taken an hour to get to Newton Stewart. But of course, we got the minibus from the Isle and then you would have to round Whithorn, probably, and collect all the Whithorn children. We didn't go through Garlieston or Wigtown, so it was just a straightforward run, but even then it must have taken about an hour. And on the way back we were dropped in Whithorn at the cafe. And quite often our minibus driver was away elsewhere, doing something else. He used to run squads of workers to the farms, so if he was collecting farmworkers he wasn't too bothered about us, because he got the money for us whether he kept us waiting or not. So you could be standing in Whithorn for half an hour waiting for Jimmy Flanagan and his minibus. So if you had a penny, you could spend a penny in the Whithorn Cafe on Granny Petrucchi's ... Petrucchi's? ... ice lollies.

JMW: And was that the first time you kind of integrated with children from other settlements other than the Isle, when you went to Ewart?

MS: It was, yes. First day at the Ewart, didn't know a soul. It was awful, absolutely awful. You know, no such thing as induction days, goodness me no! You just went. Completely lost. Really awful.

JMW: And was it a good experience after that?

MS: Och yeah, it was fine, yes. I'm not saying it was brilliant. I think the travelling was ... The distance from the school was the bugbear, it was difficult to do any extracurricular activities at all. I played hockey, and it was an even longer day on a Saturday, because you got the half past seven service bus from the Isle. And when you played hockey as far away as Greenock... so quite a long day sometimes. It was better after my mother learned to drive, she would take me up to get the hockey bus in Newton Stewart at nine o'clock, so that made it a bit of a shorter day. But that was a long day. That was voluntary, of course. I tried joining the drama club and various other things, but although I think you maybe got free transport on the service bus at night if you were staying for a

school thing, I seem to remember once or twice missing it, missing the bus at nine o'clock or whatever to get back to the Isle. I actually remember once having missed the bus completely and it was cheaper to stay in the Galloway Arms than get a taxi home! Had to phone Mum and say, 'Can I just stay?' It did make things difficult, it really did, just the sheer distance and lack of public transport. I used to envy the girls that lived in Newton Stewart, didn't have to rush for a bus all the time.

JMW: And did you stay friendly with the children who didn't go to the Ewart, who came to 01.13.50

Whithorn Secondary, or was it kind of a different world by then?

MS: That's interesting. Funnily enough, the ... I think it was a different world. I haven't thought about that! So many of them actually left school, left home, and went. Never to reappear in the Isle. Or very rarely. I obviously stayed friendly with Alistair Gamble all my life. Most of those of my age have simply gone. And certainly after their parents die, they don't come back, really. SO I think it did possibly change things. Although – sounds dreadful, this – when I was a child I wasn't allowed past the Queen's Arms anyway. I was not allowed to go up the village.

JMW: That's quite common, that distinction...

MS: No, you don't go there... I remember once being there, not much older, shouldn't have been there, but I cut my foot and went into a lady's house. And I had to tell my mother, of course, that this lady had washed and bandaged my foot. And I remember saying, 'and her house was clean and tidy!' You know, because I had been led to believe that it couldn't be! I was quite surprised that it was okay. There you are. No, I would say there was a class distinction. Simple as that.

JMW: So you went on to university after...?

MS: Yes. We'll gloss over that! I went to Glasgow, but... Seventeen, too young. I'd done sixth year too young. I had a wonderful time, for two years. Leave it at that! After that I went to college in Manchester and qualified as a primary teacher. Because I would have a job. So I actually qualified to teach French up to O grade, or O level in England, as well. So I taught French in primary in Garlieston when I was teaching there. But my initial intention had been to teach French and German at secondary, but, if you don't work, you don't! There you are.

JMW: So your first job back here was at Garlieston?

MS: No, Whithorn.

JMW: Oh, Whithorn?

MS: Yes, interestingly, I was interviewed in Stranraer by the director of education. Nineteen... oh... seventy-one. Who offered me a job either in Whithorn or Sorbie, and I said, well, there isn't much point in taking Sorbie because you're closing it soon, aren't you? That was over forty years ago... and it's still going strong! Well, maybe not strong but it's still going. So that was why I went to Whithorn, because I thought Sorbie was closing, what was the point?

JMW: That was Whithorn Primary?

MS: Yes, but it had a secondary as well... my first two years I was teaching primary two, and they went home at three o'clock, so from three o'clock to four o'clock I would take primary seven drama, or primary seven, secondary girls' netball. I'd never done netball much, or taught netball much in my life, but I learned! So that certainly changed a lot in the years, primary education, I would say. When I started it was, maybe just Whithorn, but a very strict, in primary four they do this, in primary five they do that. Primary four children did farming and primary five children did the Egyptians, and nothing changed, it was the same from year to year.

01.18.33

JMW: And this was when you started teaching?

MS: Yeah. And the teachers didn't move around either. You went into primary four and taught there for life.

JMW: Right.

MS: But I enjoyed it, the first few years. Sheila Taylor started two months after me in Whithorn, she was in primary one teaching and I was teaching in primary two. So Sheila would do all the music and I would do all the art. It was quite good. We'd big classes, thirty two, thirty three... I once... when they sent primary six and seven children in from the Isle, rather than... What they'd done was, rather than employ another teacher when Mrs McEwan retired, they decided to leave my mother in the Isle with primary one to five, and send primary six and seven into Whithorn on the bus. So the year that Mrs McEwan retired from the Isle, I was teaching primary seven in Whithorn, and I ended up with thirty-nine primary sevens. In a hut which leaked! There were huts at the bottom of the playground, which had been woodwork huts from the days of the secondary. But I remember having these thirty-nine primary sevens in this leaky hut, it was dreadful. Absolutely awful!

JMW: So your mother was teaching still at the same time as you were teaching?

MS: Yeah.

JMW: Right.

MS: For a while. She didn't ever have primary one to seven at all, I think. I think when Mrs McEwan retired it was primary one to five she had, and all of the others came to me, six, sevens came into Whithorn. So, yeah, I taught Isle and Whithorn children then, in the hut.

JMW: And this was by then the seventies, did you say?

MS: Yeah.

JMW: And so, compared with what you remembered of the Isle children and their economic

condition, how were things different, or not?

MS: Oh, I think it was quite different by then, yeah. Everybody had clothes, certainly enough clothes and probably enough food, I think. I think it was not nearly as indulged as nowadays, but certainly sufficiently clothed and fed, I think, by then. I don't remember children having lots of... well, there weren't gadgets, but I don't remember children having lots of toys. But at the same time I think they were definitely better off than in the fifties and sixties. We didn't do school trips really. Having said that, they were doing these school cruises, they were sort of starting. Already had started, because I'd done a couple as a child, actually. But I took some Whithorn children on a school cruise to Oslo, Copenhagen... yep. And I took Whithorn children, also in the seventies, to a school camp. But it wasn't all of them, it was always who could afford it I suppose. I mean, actual school trips in these days might have been a day at Portpatrick to see the lifeboats, or something like that, and the infants tended to go to the beach for the day. They still do. So, I mean, things would be... when children could afford any of them to go on a school camp for ten days with each other... That school camp in particular would be 1977, 78.

01.23.30

JMW: And was the school roll higher than it is now?

MS: Yes. When I started in Whithorn there were seven separate primary classes and each one would have over thirty children in them. So yes, you're looking at a roll of two hundred and twenty odd, quite a lot more. And of course, it was a secondary, which had pupils up to third year. Then, when the leaving age was raised, I think maybe that's when they went to the Douglas Ewart for fourth year or so. But there'd be quite a few in the junior secondary as well. Certainly for a few years, when I started teaching. I remember getting Liz Graham's room. As soon as the secondary was going, 'I want Liz Graham's room!' It was the only one upstairs, and it was light and sunny! So I put in my... I want that room as soon as they go!

JMW: So did you stay at Whithorn or did you move to another school?

MS: I went to Garlieston. Something had happened at Garlieston and a couple of days before the beginning of the new session, the director of education phoned me and asked me if I'd consider going to Garlieston, and he said I had two hours to decide, because they had to... and I thought, why not? I hadn't thought about it. And it didn't really matter... But I hadn't really thought of the extra work that is actually involved in a two-teacher school. There really is a lot more work. Cause there's only two of you to do it all! If there's seven of you, well, you can maybe share it around a bit. If there's only two of you it is a lot more work. I don't mean just the teaching, it's everything else that's involved in a school. So I ended up in Garlieston, taught primary one to three, or one to four, for ten years, and then primary four, five, six, seven, whatever it was, until I retired nine years ago. I took early retirement. I think teaching's a young person's job now! A bit younger anyway! But funnily enough, when you read in the papers about the quality of education nowadays, I don't think that the schools in this area ever lost their quality. When I retired I was teaching grammar and punctuation and spelling, and all these things that nobody teaches any more, apparently! The tables. And I'm sure I wasn't the only one doing that. I think education here is probably as good as it gets.

JMW: And did you feel, by the time you were retiring, that more children were attaining a better

educational standard than, say, in your childhood? Or does the proportion remain much the same?

MS: That's a difficult one. They're cramming too much into the curriculum. I'm sure practically everyone knew their tables when I was young because you spent so long doing it. You can't now. I mean, there is this 'the school should teach it' idea, the schools only have so long. I once worked it out. A child, for the first sixteen years of his life, a child is in school for one ninth of that time. That's the influence a school can have. Not great. Not a lot. But I am not sure whether education is better now, or... Oh, I think it has to be. Yeah, I think it has to be better now.

JMW: Wider choices, I presume.

MS: Wider choice. Being academic's not the be all and end all that it was. You certainly don't chastise children for not being able to do something.... John Roe got beaten for just not being able to do... I remember at secondary school, a boy in my class getting six of the belt for not being able to do French. Just couldn't do it, you know. It's like I can't do chemistry, he couldn't do French. Fortunately I got out of chemistry before anyone realised I couldn't do it! It was awful. So at least children must be, I would hope children are happier in school than some of them were. I mean, childhood is so short, it really is.

01.28.57

JMW: And what about the standing of a teacher in the community now, do you think?

MS: I don't know. In this area I think it's probably still okay. I do. I don't know about elsewhere. I would imagine that most people will still respect the teachers of Whithorn school. I think they probably do. As they did years ago. I think, though, maybe we used to get more parental support if something went wrong. But then, that's all individual cases, you don't really know. I remember once a primary six boy had been fighting, I won't name names, fighting with another primary six boy. And having had their rows, one of them ran home and he was ... an hour later the door was thrown open and this boy was thrown into the classroom by his father. 'If he's ony mair trouble Marion, just phone me, I'll get him!' Don't think that happens much nowadays! The boy who was being trouble is now a respectable member of Whithorn community! But I don't know.

JMW: So when did the junior secondary shut in Whithorn?

MS: It must have been '74, '75. I'm not entirely sure. I certainly taught secondary netball for a few years. It was actually quite good because we did, Sheila and I took primary children on a Saturday to play football and netball against the other schools, other primary schools. So it was quite good that I could coach the primary seven girls by having them play against the secondary schools. They had competition! I'm not saying they always won, but... So there was still the secondary certainly in the mid-seventies, maybe, I think it was. And then the names you remember, Liz Graham, Tony Graham, both went to the Douglas Ewart from Whithorn. Quite a few others. There was quite a mixture of teachers there, there were some who hadn't really qualified, but they all had come out of the army or wherever, there was one gentleman who taught cricket. There must have been a generation of Whithorn boys who were good at cricket, if nothing else! He did like teaching cricket! Any dry day they were out there. I think it was probably a disgrace, that place, in secondary school. Vic Cameron taught there. Remember Vic?

JMW: I do.

MS: But there was a distinct lack of opportunity, I think, for those who didn't make it to the Ewart. Really. The lucky ones were probably those who went on to the Ewart.

[01.32.45 brief interruption from visitor.]

JMW: I think I was going to ask you, you're now back in the Isle area, living.

MS: Never left it.

JMW: Never left it, okay.

MS: Afraid not, no. Apart from university and college I never actually left it. Too attached to the place.

JMW: So do you see large changes in the Isle village itself, and how do you feel about that?

MS: It has changed tremendously. It's when you would run into the village on an ordinary day, not a high day or holiday, and the place is empty. And ninety percent of the houses are holiday houses. It really is dreadful. It's awful. As I said, New Year and Easter the holiday houses are full, apart from 01.33.52

that it's ... There's no way round it, but I think it's shocking, and I don't think we need to build more houses in the village when they've got all these empty houses! I'm not a Welsh bomber of holiday houses, but when it's so empty, really... and what's the point in building further and further out of the village? The heart is gone from it, really. No, I'm not happy about that at all. ... Although I wouldn't say the house prices are dreadful now compared to maybe what they were like a few years ago, if local people can't afford a house, not much you can do about it, not really. So ... Oh, I go down into the village and I think 'Oh, don't know these people!' I think unless you're a stalwart of the WRI or the pub, you probably don't know people quite so much. Although my husband says that nine o'clock in the morning in the Post Office shop is dreadful. He says there's everybody in there, in a tiny room, all gossiping and wanting their paper. He says that's where you get the gossip! The Isle has changed a lot though, it has.

JMW: I mean, there is a good deal of civic activity, and potentially a big conversion of the hall. Is that something you're optimistic about?

MS: I would have to be, actually. I'm vice chair of Isle Futures! Yes. And chair of the Community Council! Yes, it can only do good really. It will bring employment, you know, in the building process it'll bring some local employment. And there are people who have said they don't like going into a pub for a coffee. It'll be an alternative. It means there will be premises for a shop if and when necessary. We're not treading on anyone's toes, we've no intention of taking business away from Shaun or Margaret, but I think it would be a good idea. I actually like the way the Village Hall is, or has been used, much more recently anyway. Even to the extent of having a funeral service yesterday in it. It can only be good for the, you know, as a focal point for the village, which

everyone can use and go into. As maybe people are more and more isolated now, you know. You need a place where people feel that they can go and have a sit and a cup of coffee and whatever, watch the world go by. Without, I hope, taking business from anybody else. We'll see. But yes, I like the idea of the ... of it.

JMW: And are you in touch with teachers that are still in the business, as it were?

MS: No, not a lot, no. I actually think teaching's a very isolating job, you only get to know children! To a certain extent. You're stuck in ... if you're teaching you're stuck in the classroom with children and that's what you see of life. No, I didn't join the Retired Teacher Association or anything like that. I've been there, been a teacher, life has moved on. If it's the kind of thing you enjoy then fine. I'm not a voluntary joiner of committees.

JMW: You've got two...

MS: I've got two, it wasn't by... I didn't put myself forward for them!

JMW: No, you were volunteered.

MS: Yes, I was volunteered, aye. So ... But I'm still interested in what goes on in education. I always like to see Whithorn School doing well. 'Oh good. Never again!' That kind of thing, you know! And of course, the present primary seven ... Evelyn, I taught Evelyn Steel in primary seven. Evelyn Steel, the primary seven teacher, anyway, the choir teacher. Evelyn tried to teach me to crochet, when she was in primary seven, in the lovely room up the stairs. And she finally... my crochet was getting tighter and tighter, and finally Evelyn gave up and said, 'Oh, Miss. What would like and I'll do it for you?' So she crocheted me a white beret, which I don't still have, but I know it was a white
01.39.12

beret that Evelyn crocheted for me. Because I couldn't, and still can't, crochet! Dreadful.

JMW: So are you optimistic about the future of education, do you think it's going in a good direction at the moment?

MS: I think children are becoming too distracted by electronic gadgetry, wizardry... I think there's too much reliance on Google, really, I do. Cause the adults doing that as well, nowadays, when we give up on a crossword, I say, 'Oh, I'll just Google it.' No! Get all the books out first! Too many distractions, too many games and a dumbing down of entertainment for children, I think. Even when you see children's television, and you see it creeping into adult television as well, the presenters don't seem able to string a sentence together. They go 'ooh, ohh,' everything is bits of soundbites, and snippets, but there's never a sentence. And again, every child has the latest gadgetry, and I don't know how they work. I really live in the Dark Ages, you see, because we don't have a mobile phone signal, which means there's quite a few things you can't have in technology.

JMW: And how do you feel about the position young people are in in this area?

MS: I think it was ever thus, that ... most children, if they want to do anything with their lives, will have to move away. I don't think it's changed. And it's not going to change. In the eighties I had a

very good friend who really racked his brains to find some kind of employment. Some kind of, not construction, but making something in this area which could be transported, which would give employment. And because there wasn't the skill here anyway, anything such as, let's say, computer chips, already been done elsewhere, I don't think there is anything that can be done, really, to bring employment. Negative, but I just don't see it. I do think that unless you're going to become the doctor or the teacher, whatever, you're going to have to move away if you want to work. The biggest employer in this area, apart from the teacher, is probably the home carer. So the young need catered for, and the elderly need catered for. And there's not jobs for those in between. You can live here as a child and you can live here when you're retired. And many people have done that. Jack Niblock and Judy, you've interviewed both of them, they had to move away. I never wanted to move away, well, I don't think I did. But I always wanted to be a teacher anyway, so that's a job you can do anywhere. You can't be a captain of a ship anywhere. And even nursing, there's not, as Judy was, she did nurse here sometimes, most jobs you can't live here. And I think that these youngsters'll have to do the same as ever. As I said, there's hardly anybody I was at primary school with who're still here. Hardly anyone. I'm afraid I have to be negative on that one, I can't see things in, you know... I mean, I remember this friend, John Turner, really, really kind. He would sit there for hours thinking, what could we do? What could this area do? Your transport links are so poor, you're so far from anywhere, that... and of course, I mean, fifty years ago there was still quite a lot of farm employment. There was. There's not that now. The farmer employs the son if the son's lucky and that's about it. Very few farm employees... Well, contract farmers of course, but not the numbers there were. I'm afraid it is a case of go and seek your fortune elsewhere and come back here and buy a house if you can afford it! Or else. Not a good answer.

JMW: No, it's a good answer. Is there anything you feel I haven't asked you that you would like to say about the Isle, teaching, or Whithorn, or...

MS: Can't think of anything, really. Can't think of anything.

JMW: I mean, it's been quite comprehensive, so ...
01.44.54

MS: Rambling!

JMW: No, no, it's covered all sorts of things.

MS: I do think the Isle is a wonderful place for a child. Absolutely wonderful.

JMW: And that's still the case?

MS: I think it's still the case. It is. They're probably safer on the Isle than anywhere else. The amount of freedom they have is tremendous, really. And if they want to they've got a sailing club there they can join free, or certainly very very inexpensive. They might say there's nothing to do, but... you know, make your own entertainment, folks!

JMW: Which always happened.

MS: Yep, aye. No, I think it's a great place for a childhood. Probably quite a good place for oldies

as well. But the in-betweens have it difficult. Can't think of anything else, sorry.

JMW: Okay, well, thank you very much. I'll switch that off.