

Interviewee: Betty Murray (BM)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
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JMW: Right, my name is Julia Muir Watt, and we are at Low Ursock, and I'm interviewing Mrs Betty Murray. So do you want to tell me when you came to Whithorn, and why that was?

BM: Well, my father took over the shop that is now the Dig shop, and it was a licenced grocer, and I was about eight and a half.

JMW: Right, and when was that?

BM: 1934 – September, 1934.

JMW: And do you remember quite well coming to the town?

BM: Yes, uh-huh.

JMW: And your parents had bought the shop, had they?

BM: No, they rented the shop.

JMW: So who was the owner?

BM: *(Long pause)* A Mr Muir from Rispin-

JMW: Okay, right-

BM: I think, but I'm not terribly sure.

JMW: I've seen... before the Dig shop was renovated, I remember-

BM: A.K. Muir, yes-

JMW: It was written on the doorstep, wasn't it. And was he still alive in 1934, he was still alive?

BM: Yes, uh-huh.

JMW: And do you remember him?

BM: Yes. He was a farmer at Rispin. But I'm not sure about – I think that's who we rented it from.

JMW: And before 1934, you lived where?

BM: Kirkcudbright.

JMW: Ah, right. And were your parents in business at Kirkcudbright?

BM: No, my father was a rep, a commercial traveller.

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JMW: Okay, right. So tell me about the shop, tell me what kind of things it sold?

BM: All sorts of groceries, everything; wines, spirits, fruit, vegetables. There was a warehouse at the back and they sold treacle and syrup in big pails, because I think they were used on farms, I think farmers used them. Soap was stored in big long bars, I think people bought a big long bar and sliced it up. But there were other soaps as well – but still bars of long soap – I think they called it “XXX” or something.

JMW: Because it’s a very large building, isn’t it, I think it must have been the biggest shop-

BM: Uh-huh, yes, and I think also they sold flour by the five stone bags, and oatmeal – huge quantities. People bought a five stone bag of flour, most of the farmers bought that way.

JMW: And did they come into to do a large shop once a month, is that how it was done for the farms?

BM: I think they came in pretty regularly –they tended to store up more in the winter than they do now; they bought in bulk.

JMW: Yes. So you must have been the largest business in town?-

BM: It was quite, yes. And then Burrow Head camp was open and my father did supply a lot to the officers mess at Burrow Head.

JMW: And did you have the run of the shop when you were a child? Were you in the shop?

BM: Yes, certainly, oh yes. I can’t remember any heating, I don’t think there was any heating those days! Then of course the war started, and there was rationing.

BM: Yes, and that would have made a big difference to your business.

BM: And I think people got permits for keeping bees, for harvest, and that was for extra sugar. They got permits over and above their coupons.

JMW: Right. So did you have to help in the shop when you were a child?

BM: No, no, later. Later-

JMW: When you were about-

BM: Fifteen/sixteen-

JMW: But it must have been an interesting place for a child?

BM: It was, yes. I suppose, looking back... I remember my father boning hams in the back. The cheese of course was cut with a wire. The butter too was a big round – not very good!

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JMW: Would you say there was more to the grocer's trade than there is now?

BM: Oh yes, it was busy. Of course, there weren't any supermarkets.

JMW: No, you'd be the biggest shop around.

BM: I suppose it would be quite different now.

JMW: So, how was the shop set up, was there a big counter, and people would have to come to the counter?

BM: There were three counters; there was one for all the dairy products, then there was a middle one for all sorts of tins of fruits and all sorts of things, and then another counter for things like wines and spirits – snuff. This thing called snuff! Tiny quantities. And lentils, things like that came loose, nothing, there weren't so many things packaged then; sugar, lentils. All that was loose in those days.

JMW: And so what was the lighting in 1934 when you came? How was it lit?

BM: Electricity!

JMW: It was, so they already had electricity in the town. And you do any deliveries?

BM: Yes, at the beginning, I remember there was a van, and a young man drove the van. And then for some reason, I don't know when, there wasn't a van. My father did odd deliveries just by car... maybe more people had transport, I don't know.

JMW: So you lived in the flat above the shop, did you?

BM: No, no. Em... *(Long pause)*

JMW: You lived up George Street? In number... Next to my mother's house, number 59?

BM: Uh-huh, that's right... But we didn't, we moved, we lived... opposite the bank, The Royal Bank, for a short time. It was difficult to get a house. We lived in a flat for a short time, and

then we got the house. And then eventually... It was difficult to get a house then, there weren't many houses. You just had to wait until one came up.

JMW: And you bought number 59, your parents bought number 59? Or did they-

BM: Yes, yes.

JMW: Right. And what about people paying for goods, how did that...?

BM: Well, lots of people had a weekly account, and then there were big ledgers, people had monthly and six monthly accounts. And some people got badly in debt. Some people had the weekly accounts, and they would pay up, so much, a shilling a week or something, to catch up.

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JMW: Did you see some customers every day? Would they come in every day?

BM: I think there were odd ones, yes. Just odd ones. But I think generally people had a weekly shop –... they had a big weekly order, and it was always written down. They knew exactly what they wanted, they didn't come in and say, 'we'll have a wee look round': they knew what they wanted. *(Interruption from Julia, who asks Mrs Murray to continue)* It was just the basics, sugar, butter, marg, soap. I think that was a weekly shop.

JMW: Ah. How did you keep things cool in the dairy department? Refrigerated-

BM: Well, it was marble. And of course, there wasn't central heating... And they covered things in muslin cloths.

JMW: So there was a marble counter?

BM: Oh yes, it was all marble, where the dairy stuff was.

JMW: Right. And how many people worked there?

BM: Well, I look back to when I was at the school, and I can remember... maybe three women? And a message boy, and the van man.

JMW: Yes. So three women, and your parents?

BM: Uh-huh, I think there were *(counts out)* two women at least, and the van man, and a message boy and my parents.

JMW: And your father was largely involved in handling the good and preparing them for sale, was he?

BM: He talked a lot to the customers! *(laughs)* I don't know whether... He talked to travellers; there were a lot of commercial travellers all the time. I think most things were

ordered that way. I think there was maybe... at least three biscuit travellers, one from Macfarlane Lang, one from McVities, and one from Gray Dunn. They all had their own rep, and that's the way the food was ordered. And then there were the whisky travellers, and wine.

JMW: And the travellers came into Whithorn how? Did they use the train to come in?

BM: They came by car, yes, they came by car.

JMW: Did they stay overnight in the town?

BM: Yes, sometimes.

JMW: So, can you tell me a little bit about the war, and how that changed [things]?

*(Phone rings in background)*

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BM: Well, everybody got ration books, I can't remember exactly what was rationed first, but it was two ounces of butter, and two ounces of marg, about two or three ounces of bacon, and two or three ounces of cheese. And sugar, that was eventually rationed. Bread was rationed after a while, and they called them *BU's*. There was a book with tickets, and they called them *BU's*, and the bread was rationed. *(clears throat)* And then jam became very scarce, and I remember a big consignment of tinned jam coming into our shop, it was South African. It was the loveliest jam we had ever tasted, fruit; it was beautiful. Tinned, South African jam, and it was beautiful.

JMW: And did you find that you were reasonably well fed during the war, because you had a shop?

BM: Well, I was! *(Laughs)* Well I was - I can't speak for everybody. I mean obviously I was. *(clears throat)* Excuse me.

JMW: And do you remember having to black out the shop windows?

BM: Yes, yes. And the hours were much longer. Saturday, nine o'clock. On Saturday we kept open til nine o'clock.

JMW: Was Saturday a major shopping day?

BM: ...Saturday, yes, was the main shopping day, because the farm worker would probably get paid on Friday night, but I don't know. And I can remember my father, putting up a huge – the first time anyone had put up a huge Christmas tree – right in the front, where the middle counter came down, and it went nearly to the ceiling. It was a massive Christmas tree, and [there was] great excitement, he's all sort of lanterns, and lights and things. They

weren't as good as they are now, but it was the children – they used to come up and stare at the Christmas tree.

JMW: Yes. Were you aware of people struggling to find enough to pay for food?

BM: Yes, I think there was quite a lot of that. There were families.

JMW: And you would know who they were.

BM: There were families that found it difficult. And then there were families that would have got into debt anyway, I suppose it happens! *(laughs)*

JMW: And what about your dairy products? Did they come from the town, did you buy local, do you know?

BM: My father bought his cheese at Millisle Farm from Mr Ramsay-

JMW: Ah right, that's interesting.

BM: Mr Ramsay made cheese, you know. And my father bought his cheese there. I don't know where he bought the butter *(laughs)*- it came from Glasgow, from a firm in Glasgow.  
00:16:19

JMW: And what about milk? Did that come from Whithorn Creamery or-?

BM: Em, we didn't sell milk, because the milkman came round. I think Sheddock Farm had a milk round, and then, somebody at Whithorn, Templeton, a little farm at the end of Whithorn – and he had a milk round. So the shop didn't really sell milk. People went out for their milk.

JMW: What about fruit and vegetables? How did those come in?

BM: It was difficult. My father used to go up very regularly to Glasgow, to the market there, and buy a lot of that sort of stuff.

JMW: Did it come in by train?

BM: I think there were delivery vans, I think so... Yes, it maybe came by train. I can't remember. It's all mixed up! *(laughs)*

JMW: That's quite alright, I'm quite curious, because I knew the trains would be operating up until the '60s.

BM: Yes, my husband had told me that – my late husband had told me – that he used to send his cattle by train to market, to Newton Stuart. And I remember going a school trip to Edinburgh. And going by train from Whithorn! *(laughs)*

JMW: So do you remember the names of the people who worked for you?

BM: Yes, there was Margaret Hawthorne, and she was Mrs Kirkpatrick. You wouldn't remember her. She was Margaret Hawthorne, and she would be related to Greta's husband, I think. And there was Maggie Little, who was one of the plumber's family. And there was David Koche, that drove the van. There was somebody called Archie McWilliam, who came from Kirkcowan I think, he drove the van too for a while. I can't remember any more.

JMW: And you mentioned a messenger boy – what did he do?

BM: There were several. Well, they delivered messages! *(laughs)* People got their order delivered, a big basket on a bicycle.

JMW: So that was round the town, or out of town as well?

BM: Round the town, I would say. And they would get all the little odd jobs to do around the shop... I don't know, maybe washing the van or washing the car or something I would say.

JMW: And what happened on the top floor – because now that's offices?

BM: It was storage, storage.

JMW: And there's a kind of under-storey at the back, and a top storey at the back-

00:19:54

BM: That's right- I think it was before our time, that was used for wheeling out the flour, and large quantities of feeding stuff they sold to farmers. You'll see there's a kind of ramp goes up, and I think that was where the large stuff was stored.

JMW: Ah, that makes sense. I always wondered what that was for. So what about other shops, what do you remember?

BM: Well, there was another grocers, further up, where Galloway's is now, that was Costly's. And there was a little one down on St Johns Street called Fishers. And there was one where the now newsagent called Matthew Lawrie. And lots of sweetie shops! *(laughs)* The one next to your house, the little house, was Johnny Stuart, and that was a sweetie shop. And that was the little house, you know-

JMW: Yes, I know the one you mean. Number 5, I think.-

BM: -Priory. And the sweets were all laid out – not covered! When I think about them. Oh it was lovely, and we used to go in and spend our pennies there. And there was a hairdresser; he was a hairdresser, up in a wee narrow stair – he cut hair and he sold sweeties. And then there was another sweetie shop, not far from the library, Molly and Joanne Hannah, and they had a sweetie shop, and they sold a few books there, and they used to have a little

lending library – not very many. A couple of dozen maybe. And we used to buy our sweets there. We got a whole penny on a Saturday, and we got two things for it! A ha’penny this and a ha’penny that! (*laughs*)

JMW: And were some of the sweets made on the premises, or were they bought in?

BM: No, no, they were just bought in the way they are now, but nothing was wrapped, when I think about it. I’m trying to think what other shops there were. There was another sweetshop, where, just opposite our shop, before it became a shoe-menders shop. That was a sweetshop as well, so there were a lot of sweetshops.

JMW: Do you remember, was it a Miss Hughes, who had sweets and chocolates, somebody Hughes?

BM: Kathy Hughes, Miss Hughes, she had – there were more expensive; maybe boxes, a better quality of sweets. She had a shop there too.

JMW: And what about drapers, did you buy clothes in the town?

BM: I think probably we did, I think so. The draper next to the bank, where – who’s there now-

JMW: The upholstery-

BM: They kept a very high quality of – I remember my mother bought dresses there, and they were lovely. I remember going with a girl who I was at school with to *Kinnear’s* to buy a pair of silk stockings for her mother, and they were five shillings.

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JMW: And did you know the Kinnear’s?

BM: Yes, yes, uh-huh.

JMW: Were the shop keepers all quite friendly with each other?

BM: Oh yes, but the Kinnear’s lived in Port William. The Whithorn shop was a later addition. Everybody knew everybody, yes, they were quite friendly.

JMW: And what about shoe makers?

BM: Well, there was a shoe maker just opposite the shop, our shop, and he mended shoes, a kind of cobbler. And there was a lovely shoe shop, just further up, *Martin’s*?-

JMW: Oh yes, I remember that-



BM: Just opposite your mother's house. And they kept very good shoes – you know, we got our Clark's sandals there in the summer. You always had a pair of Clark's sandals there in the Summer.

JMW: Were you aware of children that didn't have shoes at school?

BM: That was a big shock. I came from Kirkcudbright, and for some reason – well I went to Kirkcudbright Academy when I was about eight and a half, or eight – but that was a big shock when I came to Whithorn, to see. Looking back, there was more poverty, there was. I can't remember much about bare feet, but-

JMW: You were aware that it was different-

BM: I was aware that it was different-

JMW: Even as a child-

BM: Yes, oh yes.

JMW: And what about the school? What do you remember about that?

BM: Well it was very good school. And it was a high grade, very good education at Whithorn.

JMW: Did you go to Newton Stewart, or did you stay-

BM: No, I didn't, I left school, because I wanted to go on to Glasgow, because I wanted to go on to the 'Dough' School, as they talked about, that was the domestic. But my parents, because of the bombing, they wanted to keep there one child [back], and I regret that a bit. However, it doesn't matter, I've had a good life! *(laughs)*

JMW: So you had to stay then and work in the shop?

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BM: Yes, I did a lot of the book keeping, and a lot of the ordering.

JMW: And do you remember what year it was you started work, what year was it?

BM: No, I can't.

JMW: Was the war still on, or was the war over?

BM: Oh, I think the war was still on, because I knew all about rationing.

JMW: Yes. And did you get much benefit from soldiers coming in and buying?

BM: Oh yes, I think so. Particularly the officer's mess, sold a lot of deliveries to that.

JMW: And were you aware of the town being busy with extra soldiers?

BM: Yes, on a Saturday night it was buzzing. On a Saturday night at nine o'clock the shops were lit up. It's quite sad now to see the difference. It's quite a different place.

JMW: When you were older, were you allowed out to go to dances in Whithorn?

BM: Well, I might have been... but not a lot. I joined the badminton, and we had lovely badminton socials. And then I started to get invitations to the Penninghame Curler's Ball, and the Mochrum Curler's Ball; they were all invitations. And started to go, every winter, there was a ball, two or three balls. And you got a new long dress every winter, a new ball dress every winter.

JMW: That sounds very nice!

BM: It was! *(laughs)*

JMW: So did you do curling yourself?

BM: No, I played badminton. And a bit of tennis in the summer, but I liked badminton better.

JMW: And where did you play?

BM: In the hall at Whithorn, the badminton. And then the badminton club; I got talking to the owner of *(Gaelic house name)*, who was a Colonel Roberts. And they had a tennis club which was never used. And we kind of offered to; if we kept the tennis court *(kept it tidy)*, we could go up and play tennis. That's what we did – about a dozen of us used to cycle up and play tennis, and we kept the court for Colonel Roberts.

JMW: Do you remember watching curling matches?

BM: Yes, I think I do. Not outside. I think most of them went to Ayr, they went curling to Ayr.

00:30:23

*(Interruption from Julia, who asks Mrs Murray to continue)*

BM: We swam a lot in the summer, right from late May 'til September, we did swim a lot, and we had barbeques at the beach. They really were good – real – barbeques; we lit a fire, and swam. With most of the people we'd met at the badminton club. It was a good time. A lot of the time we had to cycle, because in those days you didn't get your father's car. It was unheard of! *(laughs)* You had to get on a bike.

JMW: Were you friendly with the people from the farms?

BM: Yes, uh-huh, I had a friend who lived out at Dunasten (?) farm. Yes, I suppose I was. I had a friend who lived at Craiglemine... yes, I suppose I was.

JMW: When I've spoken to other people, they've said there was quite a difference between the top of the town and the bottom of the town. You knew about that?

BM: Very much, yes...

JMW: Was it because the top of the town was poorer?-

BM: They were poorer. I don't know, I suppose that was it, I really don't know... Looking back it might have been religion. There were a lot of Catholics – whether that had anything to do with it in those days, it might have been. But they were poor, some very poor people up there. Quite rough.

JMW: And would you have known any people up there, or would you have known people at the bottom of town?

BM: Well, I suppose I knew Betty Stewart, who was in my class at school.

JMW: Was she?

BM: Yes. But we weren't all that friendly then. But we're – I speak to her a lot now.

JMW: But I know there were shops at the top of the town, it was almost like its own village.

BM: There was a little shop, somebody Murray, it wasn't our Murrays; somebody who came from England, had a little sweetie shop. And then Mick B (?) had a little grocer shop. So that was two shops up there.

JMW: Do you remember going to the cinema?

BM: Oh yes! That was it, we loved the cinema. It was Saturday, a great treat; there was a matinee on a Saturday – things like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. All sorts of things like that. And I suppose during the war, there was always a cinema. Lots of soldiers went to the cinema. It was well attended. It was down Kings Road... But I think, vaguely, I remember a cinema down past the school, when I came to Whithorn, and it was a kind of tent – and it was a cinema... I think I remember that... I hope I'm right!

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JMW: I think I've heard that from somebody else actually. Did you go to the church?

BM: Yes, uh-huh. And Sunday school.

JMW: Do you remember who was the Minister, when you started?

BM: When I started? Well the very first one I remember was called Mr Rogan, and he went on to Paisley Abbey I think. And then after that it was Mr Law... And then it becomes quite vague, I can't remember... Mr Law would be there quite a long time I think.

JMW: And what were the congregations like in those days?

BM: Well, about double what they are now. And a big Sunday school. They used to have wonderful Sunday school parties, down in the hall on Kings Road. Brownies, I helped with the Brownies – and I helped with the Guides.

JMW: Right. Do you think there were more clubs, groups and societies then?

BM: Yes, lots of Brownies, lots of Guides, Scouts, Boys Brigade, badminton. There was much more going on.

JMW: And how long did you work in the shop?

BM: I think it was 'til the '60s. I can't remember. My father died when he was fifty nine, and my mother carried on, and couldn't really manage.

JMW: So you were still renting it up until the '60s?

BM: Yes, uh-huh. But I think she went out, I can't remember when. She carried on, and made another little shop in the house that we were in, a little licenced grocers there, but didn't last very long... And then she retired to the Isle of Whithorn.

JMW: What happened when you gave up the lease, what happened to the big shop?

BM: I think somebody bought it as a delicatessen, for a year or two, and then I think after that, it went into a kind of – Joe Whiteford bought it, but they sold everything. It wasn't a grocers shop, no.

JMW: And at what point was it a plumbers?

BM: Well I think he would've used the back part as a plumber.

JMW: So, what age were you when you got married, if you don't mind me asking?

BM: Not at all! Twenty seven.

JMW: Can you tell me a bit about your husband's family?

BM: Well they come from, originate, at Skate at Port William. And my husband's father came to High Ursock (?) in 1900.

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BM: He came in 1900, but he still kept Skate and farmed both. And he died when, I think, my husband was eleven, and my husband had to learn very quickly how to farm, and leave school quite early-

JMW: He would, yes.-

BM: And he still farmed both. So now, I've got one son in Skate and one son in High Ursock. The family, it's been the longest farm occupied by the one family in the Port William area. It's in that book, I think. I think the first one was William Murray, then William Murray, then Peter Murray, then William Murray, there's been a Peter and a William, and then I've changed one, and made him Robin-

JMW: And you've still got a Peter and a William!

BM: There's William Robert, and William James. So we've kept the names going! *(laughs)*

JMW: So you married your husband when he was in High Ursock?

BM: Yes.

JMW: And what were you farming, what was the nature of the farm?

BM: Beef and sheep... Cattle and sheep.

JMW: Okay, and it was never varying?

BM: Never, no. There were always cattle and sheep.

JMW: And what about here, at Low Ursock?

BM: Well, this farm seemed to change hands a lot with different people. I think with my husband, the people were called Wallace, and they moved to a bigger farm – this is quite a small farm. And they moved away, and there was a succession of people; an old man, semi-retired here, and farmed it. My husband bought it- must have been about, twenty five, thirty - I can't remember. He bought it, and Peter farms that side, and Robin farms this side. And I just let it to them.

JMW: So, when you were twenty seven, did you move up to High Ursock?

BM: No, my husband had three sisters, and they were looking for a house – so we rented the house in the Isle for a year, and then moved to High Ursock.

JMW: So, how did you find farm life, when you had been a town girl?

BM: More difficult. Not as far as the farmer was concerned, because there was about three men on the farm. In the house, I had always help, because I had a stove that you had to light in the morning – a Raeburn thing – you had to kind of make it go in the morning. I didn't have a washing machine, I remember, until about three years later, because we knew there was something better coming out. The first washing machine I ever had was a twin tub, and it was wonderful. *(laughs)* But it was harder work.

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BM: But I think they do work just as hard in a different way. I mean I never went outside, unless I got out... that was unheard of! I never went outside to help. And I always had a girl in helping me, and even then I felt it [was] quite hard work, because I think more was expected of you. I suppose if you were having visitors, you'd to provide an afternoon tea with lots of things. Whereas now, [you'd say] 'I'll have to get you a mug of coffee.' You know... That'll sound awful.

JMW: Oh, no, it's going very well. So did you have any farm helps living in at High Ursock, did anyone live on the farm, apart from you?

BM: You mean, men?

JMW: Men or women?

BM: Not in my time, no. Not in my time, but I think before that, yes. Because what was the bathroom, there was a room behind it what used to be called the boys room and there was a maids room, and they were both female and male workers. But not in my time. I just had a girl who helped me in the house with the children.

JWM: And do you remember who that was? Do you remember her name?

BM: *(pause)* Why's it not working... I had several. I had somebody called Margaret Keith, Mary Keith – they were sisters. And then I had Mrs Kilty – Ella Kilty – who lived in St John Street. I had her for forty years.

JMW: Goodness me! *(laughs)*

BM: And I've now got her daughter! But that's different, I only have her once a week, or twice a week. But at the beginning, I had a little girl in every day. And I had one, Margaret – who came to visit me recently – and she's wonderful, she's done very well for herself. She came to me when she left school, and she looked after the baby, who was Robin. She cycled every day, from Craiglemine, the cottage opposite the school. She cycled every day. There was a gale, a terrible gale one day, one evening, and lots of trees blew down between High Ursock and Craiglemine, but Margaret came to work: she just lifted her bicycle over the trees! *(laughs)* And now she's a very smart, glamorous woman, and she comes to see me regularly.

JMW: And did you have to make lunch for the men coming from the fields?

BM: Yes, I didn't like that, it was hard work! *(laughs)* That was mill days, only for the mill. When the mill came, and you had to give them a.. they ate a lot! It was probably something like soup and mince, potatoes. And I had to feed the men in the field at harvest time. Make scones and things, carry them out to the field. Tea...

JMW: So were you aware of the work going on the farm? You know, were you aware of the seasons on the farm?

BM: Very much, uh-huh.

JMW: Because your work changed according [to it].

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BM: Absolutely, absolutely. The first thing my husband told me was, 'you have to stock up for the winter... you must have extra flour-', of course, I never thought of things like that. In case of snow, and right enough, people did – they weren't starving if there was a fall of snow, you could last for a fortnight with what you had.

JMW: So what kind of machinery did you have on the farm?

BM: Well, at the beginning, I remember there were binders to cut the corn. And then I suppose it changed-

JMW: -And were they drawn by tractors?

BM: Yes, uh-huh. And I think in my time, yes, I don't think there were horses in my time... But the old man here had horses, but I don't remember horses. But I remember my husband had horses before [we] were married... It must have been a Clydesdale horse, because told me that in one of the big snows – I think it was 1940 – he got on horseback, on the Clydesdale horse to Skate, which is thirteen miles away.

JMW: And were you here for the big snow in 1947? Do remember the big snow of 1947?

BM: Yes, uh-huh.

JMW: Were you at Ursock or were you-

BM: No, no, I was at Whithorn. We used to go sledging up behind, what they call the Kevin Braes, up the top of the town. There's a field bit right down to Kings Road, and we used to sledge down there.

JMW: That was a huge snowfall, wasn't it?

BM: It was, yes. I think they dropped yeast, from the baker to make bread, I remember that. I think people coped very well, in-fact, I think people coped better than they would today – because they all had fires. You know, if it happened today it's a different story. They're so dependent on pressing buttons. I mean, we could cope, and I still think I could cope today: when a lot of younger people might not be able to.

JMW: When you were on the farm, did you bake every day?

BM: I wouldn't think I baked every day, no, not me. I baked a lot, because I think when the children were younger, the trend was for having high tea rather than a meal at night. I baked more like pancakes, and rock buns, things like that. To kind of supplement whatever we had. So there was more baking – much more baking. People coming to visit in the evening, lots of baking, lots of different things.

JMW: Has that changed on the farms now?

BM: I think it has yes, I think we tend to do less of that now. That is easier, I would think.

JMW: And what about- did your husband sell his livestock at Newton Stewart?

00:51:16

BM: Yes. Mostly, yes. They went up to the market, on a Wednesday. He bought a lot of his stock in Ireland. He went over to Ireland and bought a lot of cattle there. Then for a while he went into Pedigree Hereford's, and we went down south a lot to the Hereford sales. Peter didn't carry that on – Peter is more interested in sheep, which his father was as well. He has some pedigree sheep.

JMW: So how many helpers does Peter have on the farm now?

BM: Oh I don't- helpers? Oh, just one, occasionally, I don't think it's full time. It's hard work – he never has any holidays.

JMW: Did you have any holidays in your day?

BM: No, not really!

JMW: So that hasn't changed? (*laughs*)

BM: But I went away, he was very good – I got going away on my own, you know. He wasn't great for going on holidays; if it was a market, yes. We did go to Paris once to see... it was farmer things again! And we went to Dublin once, but that was cattle again. I didn't get a lot of holidays then. But I've made up for it since! (*laughs*)

JMW: Well that's good! So how do you feel the farms have changed?

BM: Well, it's very sad, because there are very few family farms left... Because one person is taking over three farms, and the houses are empty. Whereas, there would have been a family in these cottages – two families – there would have been a family in all these cottages. There would have been a family at Balcraig, that's gone, just recently. There would have been a family, or two, and Craigmeline; I think they've all been, what's the word... amalgamated. There's not the same community. I find the difference in my lifetime is that people don't know one another. I found the difference when I used to go to the library – I would speak to so many people, I've always gone to the library. And in recent years, even in the last twenty years, I used to come home and say to William, well it must be twenty years, as he's nearly twenty years dead; 'I just don't know anybody!' 'That's nonsense,' he'd said, 'I didn't see a soul I knew.' He wouldn't believe that, I said, 'that's true!' I used to go into the library and they're all strange, but they don't seem to know each other, do you know what I'm getting at?

JMW: Yes, I do.

BM: It's not the fact that I don't know them, they don't know each other. So many people have come to live [here] – I'm not saying that's a bad thing – but the community has gone. There's no community the way it was, and I think it will get worse. I mean, there's the



Greta's', and the Betty Stewarts', and the Betty Murrays'; I mean when they're gone, I don't know. You could go into Whithorn and not see a soul you know. An' it's quite sad really. There was the baker, and the (? *Dentist*), and the baker, and the iron monger, and the two newsagent shops, an' two butchers. It was really quite good; a nice community. But I'm as much to blame as anyone, because I go to the supermarkets.

JMW: Well, we all do. Were you aware of travelling salesmen coming to the farms? Was that more common?

00:56:29

BM: That stopped. It used to be, oh, there were a lot.

JMW: Was that for farm supplies, or was it also for the house?

BM: It was farm supplies, I think, West Cumberland farmers, things like that. Wylie, grain merchants, they all had their travellers coming round. I suppose the farms are quite lonely places now to live, at the beginning there was always men going around, and travellers coming up. There isn't that anymore. And the cottages have all been let for tourism.

JMW: Do you think the farm, your farm, is more prosperous now than it was then?

BM: I don't think- no. I really don't know.

JMW: It's really hard work-

BM: They seem to do well enough, they seem to- I'm not hearing things like that now. It's very difficult for me to say. Well I suppose they supplement their income by letting cottages. Maybe they- farmers never seem to get the price they want! (*laughs*) My other son, he farms, but he runs an antique business as well, so it's difficult for me to say. They seem very affluent, but whether it's all from farming. He does very well with his antiques, in America-

JMW: So they've diversified-

BM: Yes. They let their cottage as well, the farm cottage is let too.

JMW: So you've got a grandson in farming?

BM: Yes, I do. James, I've got one, but James is maybe going to take over the farm, but he's going to sell computers as well. He's got a sideline – he's doing better with the computers I think than with the farming. So he's not really keen on the farming, but he wants to keep the farm because of the history.

JMW: And you've got William here who's-

BM: Yes-

JMW: So you see the farm going on, the two farms? You see them going on in the family?

BM: Yes, that's right.

JMW: Are you quite optimistic about the future?

BM: I don't know... I don't think things are as good, no. I don't know... I don't know what to think really. In some ways, life is easier for a lot of people, but there's something missing. Something missing. The community thing is gone, and we're beginning to get more like the city, where you don't really see many people to speak to. Although my daughter still comes up, and gets excited when somebody says hello, she says, 'Oh! They're so nice up here!' (*laughs*) We've still got that. So much so that they started looking at houses in the Kirkcudbright area, so they think they're going to retire in a few years time.-

01:00:49

JMW: Back to your roots? Back to your roots in Kirkcudbright?-

BM: Yes, yes. My son-in-law comes from Edinburgh, but he doesn't want to go back to Edinburgh, so (*? Mary and'im*) wants to be in striking distance of her family: and he doesn't want to go to Wigtonshire. So she's keeping her fingers [*crossed*], they've been looking at some lovely houses there.

JMW: One thing I forgot to ask you was, when your parents had the shop, did they wear a special clothing?-

BM: No, the staff did-

JMW: So what did they wear?

BM: My mother really just did a bit of book keeping at times, when my father was away in Glasgow buying. No they didn't no.

JMW: Was there any kind of overall or coat that they wore?

BM: Most of the staff had an overall, yes.

JMW: Was that just a front buttoning coat, or?-

BM: Yes, something like that, yes.

JMW: Of a particular colour?

BM: I can't remember. I don't think it was of any particular colour, no...

JMW: And what about on the farms, how has clothing changed, from when you remember starting?

BM: Oh that has changed a lot. My husband wore boots, but the boys don't. He wore heavy boots... I suppose they wore heavier clothing. I think the winters maybe were colder. I think they wear more jeans now – my husband wore corduroy trousers. And when he went out he'd wear a sports jacket; a tweed jacket, and maybe a checked shirt. And Peter, he just probably wears a shirt and a sweater, he never wears a sweater. It's quite casual now.

JMW: And when you were at the farm, did you keep going to the church at Whithorn?

BM: No, I changed to go to Glasserton, to my husband's church.

JMW: And did you both go?

BM: Yes. Not all the time, but more or less. And I sent all my children to Sunday school at Whithorn; and only one goes occasionally out of the three... that's Peter. He does some of the work for the outside buildings and things like that. He hardly ever goes to church. That's all – even my daughter and her husband go to church, but he took the Armistice when he was in the army, but that was about it.

JMW: Your husband, during the war, did he stay on the farm?

01:04:45

BM: Yes, there was nobody else. And he was in the Home Guard.

JMW: Oh, was he? Did he tell you about that? –

BM: I remember stories about it, yes... I've forgotten most of them. You know, funny stories about the Home Guard. I think they used to meet up where Margaret Wilson lives, I think that's where they had their meetings.

JMW: 'Cos you're very close to Kidsdale and Burrow Head here, do you remember those camps, do you remember seeing things?

BM: Oh yes, I remember when I was at school, going with an older girl, the lady in the bank sent us to sell flags for – I can't remember what charity it was – and we went round Burrow Head camp, selling flags. That wouldn't be allowed now, you wouldn't be allowed to. I remember being absolutely terrified when they shot down the- they were firing to shoot the Queen bee, and it must have been something to do with my hearing, because I just couldn't stand it, I could have went crazy. My hearing's got wonky.

JMW: And they were doing that while you were up there?

BM: Oh yes! We got quite used to seeing that thing going round and round all of the time, and they were shooting at it all of the time.

JMW: And there was some sort of an airfield at Kidsdale?

BM: Yes, I remember that. I must have been very young, and I had an older friend; she took me to something there – a concert? The airmen.

JMW: Were there buildings there to house them?

BM: Oh yes, quite a lot.

JMW: There's not much to see now.-

BM: Is there not?-

JMW: Well I've been up there-

BM: But no, it was quite a busy place.

JMW: Uhm... Now, is there anything I've missed?

BM: ...I'm just trying to think! I don't think you've missed very much, if it's of any use.

JMW: In your early memories of Whithorn, do you remember horse-drawn vehicles much?

BM: Yes, I remember one of the deliveries – now it's coming back – from the station, a horse. And a delivery cart, it was a man called Willie McMaster. He delivered the stuff that came by rail.

JMW: So was he employed by the railways?

01:07:56

BM: He must have been. Or was- he might have been employed by Carson, the coal merchant. For he delivered coal as well, so maybe they took the stuff from the train too. The coal merchant lived in a house opposite your house.

JMW: Yes, I know that. Do you remember much about the creamery in operation?

BM: It seemed to be very busy, tractors, and butts of cream-milk – going up and down the road, early morning.

JMW: And you remember people being employed there?

BM: Yes, quite a lot. Quite a lot of [people] were employed there.

JMW: Do you remember any of the mangers of the creamery?

BM: There was Mr Baxter, who was the father of the late chemist. And then there was Mr Maxwell, that's the only ones I can remember – Mr McKelvey – they were all employed at the creamery. McKelvey. Then a lot of, I can't remember the names.

JMW: And do you remember the public houses; I mean you might not have been in them, but do you remember them being there?

BM: Public houses... Well, I think the Railway Inn would always be there, and I remember The Grapes Hotel, The Calcutta Inn, I think that's all I can remember. My husband used to tell me, where the- he knew a lot of old stories as to what things had been, and he said there was a public house at The Venal, do you know where The Venal is?... You know The Grapes Hotel, the house on the opposite side, the steps up? Well that was a public house. And the house at The Pend was a public house. That was Kate McQueen, and I remember that. I remember Kate McQueen's pub, because I was wheeling a friend who was much younger in a pram –because we loved to wheel prams- and I used to stand at the butcher

shop and let go! And then I used to run and catch it at The Pend, and it went over. The old lawyer came out of Kate McQueen's, and gave me a dressing down! *(laughs)*

JMW: Did you ever see the interior of Kate McQueen's?

BM: No, no-

JMW: Never were inside?-

BM: I think that's the difference now, we weren't much inside. Even when I was first married; women didn't go so much to pubs as they do now.

JMW: Did your husband ever go into a public house?

BM: Oh, I think he would, probably. Maybe... He did take a drink, but can't remember him going to any locals...

JMW: How were the pubs regarded by people? Did they keep away from them if they were respectable or was it quite mixed?-

01:12:00

BM: I think that they just took them for granted! I never thought much about it. There probably were quite a lot of fights sometimes outside pubs. Still the same as today.

JMW: What was Whithorn's reputation like, outside Whithorn?

BM: I think it was sometimes quite bad, sometimes a bit of trouble with families fighting. I vaguely think so.

JMW: And do you remember the Catholic church being up the top of the town, in a tin church?

BM: Yes, I do, I do. I remember Tina, Mrs Sorianni, being married there.

JMW: Right. Did you go to the wedding?

BM: No, I didn't go to the wedding, but she was married up there.

JMW: Was there much mixing between Protestants and Catholics?

BM: I don't think so... I just wasn't aware of it.

JMW: You don't think there was much of an issue between them though?

BM: I think it was just accepted. I never heard of any strong feelings about it, no strong feelings about it at all.

JMW: Well, if you think we've covered everything you'd like to say-

BM: I can't think of anything else-

JMW: It's been very good. Thank you very much.