

Interviewee: Alex Harswell (AH)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
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JMW: I am Julia Muir Watt, and it's the 29th September, and I'm interviewing Alex Harswell in Whithorn. So, if you want to start perhaps, just tell me a little bit about your family?

AH: About my family? I was born and bred in Whithorn; my first memory was thirteen St John Street, which was the house I was born in. My father was a paper and decorator who had originally been self employed. Anecdotally, as it goes, the Queen came to Whithorn in 1953, which was the year before I was born, he claims, or claimed, that he painted a lot of properties in Whithorn and was never paid for it. I've heard differing stories, but that was his story, so I've got to go with it. He thereafter worked for a firm, John Coit, In Newton Stewart – he travelled to Newton Stewart daily on a motorbike-

JMW: Right-

AH: I can remember the smell, I still keep a fond memory of the smell of the engine when it's cooling down. My mother was from Whithorn, I think my father was born on the Isle, the Isle of Whithorn. My mother was born in Whithorn and she was a bus conductress, or a clippy, and claims that I travelled on the bus from Whithorn to Stranraer before I was born, on several occasions! I have one sister and one brother – my grandparents – I knew my paternal grandfather, but never my grandmother. My paternal grandfather had been a farm labourer, and my first memory of him was that he was living in Clabeth Cottage, in the Isle of Whithorn, which is sadly no longer there. It was a cottage across the road from The Captain's Wheel, I think the big house is now called?-

JMW: Yes, mhmm.

AH: There's still a well, where the cottage was, called the Claddie Weill. It's a long time since I've been there, but I have been there. My maternal grandfather I didn't know, I never met, but my maternal grandmother lived in Whithorn, and she lived in the Cross House; what we call the Cross House. Which is 1-3-7 George Street? The one that sticks out at the top. So born in St John's Street, I think my first real memory – was of Bell's garage, was still there, but it wisnae Laurence Bell; it would be Sammie Bell, who was his grandfather, he ran it. Always went across to the garage, I was a wee boy, I was in and out of the garage. There are still two or the people that would have worked at the garage kicking around, Laurence McShean, who would just be the boy, in those days; and John... his second name will come back to me. So that was my early life, I went to Whithorn junior secondary school, went through primary 1 to 7. It was a poor time; we didn't have a lot of cash – we still had parish boots, as they were called. Tacky boots. And they used to rub your ankles something rotten! *(both laugh)*

JMW: Right.

AH: But, it was a happy childhood, as I say, my father painted and decorated – originally, he worked for John Coit, eventually, he got the job working for Whithorn Town Council, and

was the Burgh painter – from the mid '60s, right through to the reorganisation of local Government in 1975. The late Ian Drape, who was Provost in '74-'75, my father was sixty four in '74, Provost Drape encouraged his to stay on – 'Och, just stay with us Alec until we get to this restructuring that's going to happen and you can retire with the rest of us.' And sadly he died in the December of that year, so he didn't get his retirement.

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AH: But, the Burgh Council was quite an organisation, I think I was saying earlier on, I remember the men who worked with my father were 'Spook' McGinn, Hugh McGinn – Hugh was the dust cart man, and I do remember the original dust cart which was towed by a horse, and then we got a tractor and trailer, and that was real modernisation in Whithorn, when the dust cart [became] a tractor and trailer. And many a run I had from here to Black's Plantation, to the Coup. I also remember the Coup that was on the Garlieston Road... It was a guy called Ambrose who was the refuse collector at the time.

JMW: Uh-huh, yes.

AH: But Hugh McGinn, he did the refuse, my father did the painting; there was a guy called Jimmy McWilliam, who was the joiner, and did all the joinery work; and Jim Norcoy, commonly known as Knocky Norcoy – Jim came from Orkney, but he had married a local lass and settled down here. And then there was Alec Steel, who was also a general labourer. That was the total compliment of the work force, apart from the Burgh foreman. And the Burgh foreman, originally, in my mind, was a guy called Archie Frew, who became a Clerk Watch at Wigtown District Council. And then there was Johnnie Johnston, who followed Archie through, and he was also a Clerk Watch at one time. But sadly both of them have now passed away.

JMW: Yes.

AH: But they maintained a housing stock in Whithorn, and kept the town clean and tidy. I was just looking, before I came into your house, at the war memorial. These weeds would never have been growing round the war memorial had the Burgh Council still been there; they had a pride in the town that I think, sadly, has been lost – not by the people – but by the fact that we're working with a huge organisation called Dumfries and Galloway Council.

JMW: Yes, [indeed]-

AH: I mean, I've got to accept some responsibility for that. Mum worked for various people after my sister, brother and I were up a wee bit: she used to look after elderly people, she was a home help, in the days before we had the caring community, and all the carers. She looked after a lady called Mrs Henderson who lived next door to us in fifteen St John Street, and latterly, she looked after a Miss Little – her family had been in Whithorn a long time... The Little's, they had the plumbing business in Whithorn, and one of, I think it was her niece, was my teacher – Mrs Little. My first ever teacher, she had primary 1 - she was a very stern teacher for a 5 year old. Whithorn was a fairly harsh place, as I say, the schools were not the way they are now. I do, as I say, have fond memories of the school. There was Mrs Little, who was primary 1, primary 2 was Billy Lyon's late wife's sister – and her name

escapes me, I'm afraid – primary 3 was the indomitable Barbara Henderson, who remembered, one famous occasion; I remember, saying to one of the pupils, 'You know, you're almost as stupid as your mother was, and I taught her too.' I remember that being said, and it meant nothing... That being said, I think she one referred to me as 'stupid but saveable!' (*both laugh*) And she was right, probably! And then we had Mrs Hale, was primary 5, and she was another real indomitable lady; and she was the first teacher who really took me in hand. Made me work... And Miss McKenzie, I think Miss McKenzie came from Wigtown; and she did P7 and P6.

00:09:29

AH: Although, I'm afraid the names of the others escape me. If I had long enough to go through my mind, I would probably remember them... Mrs Wilson, who married the – Pete – Miss Pete, she married Eric Wilson who was the music teacher, and they still live in Stranraer. And you'll have come across Christine-

JMW: Yes, yes-

AH: Christine was with the Whithorn Dig for a long time... that's was when it was still in Whithorn, the board of management or something it was called, I remember that... Childhood, as I say, we hadnae a lot of money; I remember my treat was going along to the local sweetie shop – there was a sweetie shop in St John Street, and that was my treat on a Saturday morning. I think I got thruppence, an old thrupp'ny bit. And that was your spending money for the week all through primary school. We moved from Whithorn and lived at the Skeog Farm, at that time I would be 9-8; we lived in the Skeog cottage, the one that sits looking on towards the town as you go to the back road to the Isle?

JMW: To the Isle, yes.-

AH: And that was an education for me, as the first thing I did was go to the farm. And I remember many years later, when Wigtown District Council were in dispute with the indomitable Peter Vance, I was the young lawyer, and the chief executive was a man called D.R. Wilson. D.R. for some reason took me under his wing, he was having this meeting with Peter Vance, and he invited me to attend the meeting with Peter. And Peter looked at me and he says, 'Aye, I jist about brocht you up!' And that kind of put my gas at a peep! (*both laugh*)

That was typical Peter, very quiet man, almost appeared to be surly. But you'd hardly know, an absolute gentleman. So I worked as a kinda dairy boy, and helped out – well, I thought it was helping out, I fed the calves on the farm with Sinclair and Syth, so we were there for about three years.

JMW: Yes.

AH: We were there in the year of the fairly big snow in Whithorn, in '63. We were snowed up in Whithorn, luckily, we werenae snowed up in Skeog... I doubt very much if we would have survived. Although people did pull together. I remember, we didnae have the mechanical stuff they have now, and the Burgh boys, with shovels, cleared the main street. And the snow was – well to me, the snow was really deep.

JMW: Yes-

AH: So, I'd gone back to Skeog, and the roof had just filled with snow, and the water was just pouring everywhere. But we survived... Goin back to my grandparents, as I say, Granny Marshall, as she was, it was a huge family. I had... (*counts out loud*) 5 aunts, and an uncle. They sorta moved away, it was a strange family. There was my mother, who was considered to be the snob of the family because she married someone who aspired to do something with their life. I had an aunt who- I never found out what happened to her, she died very young. I still see her family now and again, the Neill's. In fact, one of the boys, William, actually works for the Council, he's an I.T. engineer, and I met him for the first time when he started to work for me!

00:13:49

AH: As an I.T engineer. I had never met the lad before that, the family split. I had an aunt who was married to a dairyman, and they moved around, and settled in the Kilmarnock area. And my aunty Miriam was a great baker, they- uncle Willie was a farm labourer at Cutcloy, and they did the mushroom farming at Cutcloy, for the Simpson's. But they're no longer with us. Granny was the matriarch of the family, grandfather had been a Roman Catholic, and she was a Murray, so she was very much Protestant, and the agreement was that the girls would be Protestant and the boy would be Roman Catholic! (*both laugh*) The boy went to the army, my uncle John went it to the army, settled – married someone down south, settled in Cambridge, and he was a bus driver in Cambridge. But such was my grandmother's force of will, that he visited Whithorn for his summer holidays when she was alive. And I remember my cousins, they must have been fed up being dragged along from Cambridge, all the way to Whithorn, because granny Marshall insisted that they come to Whithorn. She was the matriarch.-

JMW: Mmhmm-

AH: And the story of mouter was when we went to Cambridge, not very frequently, it was a long drive in those days – there was no M6! It was auld Austin 7's they were driving, so the drive took about ten hours or something like that. But when she was ready for home, she picked up her walking stick and put her hat on; that was her, everybody had to go she was ready for home... that was an end to the holidays, so to speak! But she was very kind to the whole family, and she kept the family together. I think after granny died, the family just scattered. I remember being at weddings and Christenings and things like that, but after granny died it just seem to – well not fall apart, but people drifted.

JMW: Yes-

AH: And of course time was moving on, we were into the '70s. The '70s to me were a bit of a blur: I left Whithorn in '72. I remember getting the bus – I was going to Aberdeen University, decided to go to Aberdeen for some strange reason to do law. I remember getting the half past six bus from outside The Grapes to Newton Stewart, a bus from Newton Stewart to Ayr, Ayr to Glasgow, then train from Glasgow to Aberdeen. It was quite an adventure for a wee

boy who had only been out of Whithorn for odd summer holidays. To Paris once, twice, with the school.

JMW: Mmhmm.

AH: The late Tony Graham, used to run, he took primary 7, and first year at the Douglas Ewart, they took them every year to France; and I was lucky enough to go twice. I think the cost was something like thirty quid, for the whole- for the bus, and the plane, but that was about the only time I left Whithorn, until I was at university... I went to Germany the year I went to university. Chasing a young lady – and when I'd got there, she didn't really want me! She'd found somebody else! *(both laugh)* So that was a long trip for nothing. But I left Whithorn to go to the Douglas Ewart high school, passed the eleven plus... six very happy years there. Although I must admit, the tap o the toon and the bottom o the toon came out: I used to come off the school bus – we got the bus at what was Milligan's shop in those days, just up the street here, now Galloway's.

00:18:09

AH: I remember huddling in the doorway of that shop on the wet mornings, waiting on the bus to come, and the bus always dropped us outside the chapel at night, about quarter to five for a good- oh it sticks in my memory, it was probably shorter than what I think it was, but I used to be met by a crowd of boys, waiting for me coming off the bus. The taunts, and the jeers, by that time I was living at the top o the toon, I was in 126 George Street – infact, I wasn't, I was in 2 High Street at that time, which was infamously called, well it had been, it was the star inn. It was a pub at one time. We lived in there.

JMW: Yep, right.

AH: And as I say, I remember running the gaunt out of these guys, going home. Then my father intervned them. I don't know how he did it, but he stopped it.

JMW: And was that because you went to the Douglas Ewart and they were at the Whithorn-

AH: They were at the Whithorn junior secondary, yes, which Tony Graham once told me should have had a sign above it, 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!' Tony had not high regard for the educational experience at Whithorn junior secondary school. But that was it, I was just a snob, because I'd gone to the comprehensive school, the Douglas Ewart. I don't know what motivated them. Then a couple of boys from that end of the town came to Douglas Ewart as well and that changed suddenly. But I know a couple of guys who were in my class at Whithorn primary who should have gone to Douglas Ewart and didn't, whether it was money, or whether it was they just didn't want to go, I don't know, but I was desperate to get to Douglas Ewart.

JMW: There's a pervasive theme with everybody I'm interviewing from Whithorn about the distinction, and it's equal, there's equal resistance from either side – and people like Betty Stewart say, way didn't associate with people at the bottom of the town. And people like

Jenny Jolly, who were just below the Port's Mouth say, we weren't allowed up. It's very distinct in a very small geographical [way].

AH: It's a real... I never, I don't know why it was, it just was, and it had ay been. Because I was born in St John Street, I used to go around The Park. And I remember The Park when it was prefabricated houses; it was wee prefabs. Then the Doran's were built, I remember when the Doran's were built. But it was a strange thing. Until I moved to two High Street, I don't think I'd ever been through the Port's Mouth. Although, my granny lived in a Cruden house, at the very top – near where Betty Stewart now lives, At the tank. Granny lived there, but I was just a baby, and I would be pushed on the pram. But when she moved down to the Cross Hoose, I don't think I was ever through the Port's Mooth, until we moved to 2 High Street. And we moved to 2 High Street when I was a teenager, I was just going to Douglas Ewart.

JMW: And were you told never to go up there?

AH: No, it never featured on the [radar]... I used to, when you were running with the gang, we played on, originally, on the playing fields down at the bottom of the town. Castlehill; and then when I moved to school, the world was my oyster! I used to go to Drumaston – infact, I was talking to a guy called Lindon Cosh, always known as Joe, for some reason – his grandparents lived in this very house. I played in that back garden!

00:22:08

JMW: Oh right, gosh!

AH: When there was the horrible toilets!... But Joe and I were talking about it, and he worked at Drumaston, and I used to go about there as well – he was just the dairy boy at Drumaston as well. He used to cycle out there from Whithorn. But you played with the- you kept to a very localised area, even at school, I remember playing with Ian Bodle – who's mum and dad had the shop across, Gordon's shop, as it was called. Ian, sadly, got burned in a fire, if you recall?-

JMW: I do, yes.-

AH: Ian and I, we used to play in the gardens at the back of the chapel. There was a house came down for Wilson's, and there was a big garden in there – it had monkey puzzle trees in it. I don't know if it's still there or not. That's where we used to go – but never through the Port's Mouth...

JMW: I mean, was there an economic distinction, were people poorer up at the top? Or not really?

AH: I would have said probably yes, I think the was a higher instance of unemployment, up the top. Why that was I don't know; it was maybe the reduction in the agricultural economy, mechanisation was coming in – there wisnae so much need for labour. It was just a fact. There were more unemployed people up the top, and it was different kind of families. I never really got tho the bottom of why. But it was a fact, and it just happened. The other

thing, my memory of Whithorn, was that my father was the church officer, the Beadle. We kept the church clean, and most Saturday afternoon's I spent half the time helping to polish the church. And hoover it, get it ready for the Sunday. I don't know if they still have a Beadle now. But my father rang the bell, and brought the Minister in. And my mother cleaned – we had to spring clean – we kept the church neat and tidy, for more years than I can remember. From when I was fairly young, I would have said 6, 7 right through to my teenage years. And the year my father died, on the Sunday morning, my brother played the organ and I rang the bell for him.

JMW: Right, yes.

AH: So, Douglas Ewart was a great place, I got to say. I owe a lot to Douglas Ewart. So you move on. Left Whithorn, as I say, in about 1972, off to Aberdeen University, and I never really came back to Whithorn. I came back in the holidays, I have very fond memories of working at a place called the Solway Precast; there used to be a double decker bus full of people, went every morning from here down to the Solway Precast. It was known as Alcatraz. They made prefabricated concrete, in some of the most primitive ways you've ever seen. It was hard work, I worked in the steel shop – hauling steel, cutting steel, and eventually aspired to be a welder. I became a welder by accident, one of the guys didnae turn up for work one morning, and the foreman said to me, have a wee shot. And we built the windows for Cross House Hospital, in Kilmarnock, when I was there. And they were big, they were heavy. A lot of women worked at the precast, a lot of women from Whithorn worked at the precast – in fact, there'll still be some around. It was hard work, it was dirty work – but it was a job.

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AH: I can remember, I came off the bus- it was my first term break- I came off the bus, and the first place I went was to the employment exchange. Because I was on a grant; I coundnae hae gone to university without a grant. But I was going to be coming, living at home, and the dole was rubbish... [REDACTED] said to me-you'll have met [REDACTED], Tom worked for Scottish Enterprise for a long, long time.-

JMW: Mmhmm-

AH: Tom said to me, 'I'm sorry, I canny help you,' he says, 'there's only one place there's work, and that's the precast, and we don't tell people to go to the precast.' Because if you didnae go; you got offered the job, and they stopped your dole. So they had a policy of not forcing people to go. So I walked from Newton Stewart to Creetown, met the guys incharge of the precast, started the following morning. We Johnnie Kennedy drove the bus. And Jack Henry, there's another one, I don't know if you've come across Jack?-

JMW: I know the name, yes-

AH: Jack drove the bus for years. And at that time, when you were working at the precast, the prisoners from Penninghame worked there, and they were just ordinary people – but some of the stories I'd be able to tell you were unbelievable. Aye, they were long termers, some of them were in for murder. Various other nasty activities. But they came to

Penninghame House, just towards the end of their sentence – and we used to smuggle in illicit liquor, and smuggle out letters. The guy who lives up the road, John Templeton – Jeek – Jeek worked at the precast for one summer I was there: - he only lasted for one summer, Jeek! (*laughs*) I remember he had a three wheel car, and he and I used to go in the car, because the bus was off. They broke for the holiday. And I didnae really want two weeks holiday, in the middle of, what was my working time. So we went to follow the maintenance crew, and the maintenance crew were all prisoners. Everybody else got a holiday. And they got paid in tobacco – and we got paid in money. That was their pay, and they used to queue up with the rest –it was all cash in those days – they used to queue up. But it was significant: because of the hours I was working. I was earning more than my father...

JMW: So the structure of the Burgh, just to come back to Whithorn, I mean it's intriguing now, just to think of the town having its own core of Government centred here. What do you remember of the Councillors, and how it worked?

AH: I remember notices... I had an interest in the law, going way back. I'll digress for a minute... Whithorn Town Council had its own town clerk, who was also the local solicitor or the local firm of solicitors. And it was (*Ian*) Alexander. And I remember Archie Alexander, he was a very tall, imposing man, and their office was just across the road there. There was the rent office excreta. And when R.G. was bought out by Fergusson and Foster, as was then, they regained the (*Ian*) Alexander name, the town clerk then became a guy called Bill Ray. Bill formed a friendship, of sorts, with my father, and Bill encouraged me. Bill Ray was the reason I went into law. I remember Bill telling me that his mother had scrubbed steps in Glasgow so he could go to university. So Bill's a very down to earth guy, very down to earth guy. I greatly admire him.

JMW: Mmhmm-
00:30:50

AH: I remember, way back in the early days, I'd just been in my teens seeing the notice on the town hall way. There had been due to be an election, in Whithorn, of Councillors, and there had been so little interest that they decided they would just co-opt people. Now, I'm absolutely certain that goin back – and it wasn't down to any malice or anything like that, but there would be many Councillors co-opted, and they were all from the bottom of the toon. An I think that in itself may have created some of the mistrust. I remember reading some of the newspapers- in the good old, bad old days, the news papers used to quote the Town Council verbatim. So the editor of the Galloway Gazette or the Free Press would come down to the Town Council and they would scribe out what was being said. I remember reading about that. And John Neill, the editor of the Free Press, told me in later life; he remembers sitting in a Council meeting in Whithorn where they were discussing something which was of more than of very local importance, and they couldnae make up their mind what they were going to do about it. The Provost leaded back to John and said, 'You were at Wigtown last week, John, what did they dae at Wigtown?' (*both laugh*) But the core of the Council – they were all well meaning people, there was no doubt about they. They were all fairly affluent people, that was just the way it was. It was small enough to be fairly easily managed. And they had people who worked for them who just got on with their job, basically.

JMW: Mmhmm.

AH: I think [REDACTED] Town Council titles had been lost in the mists of time, and Bill was in charge when they were doing the modernisation of the town. And they knocked the Cruden's down, and they built – they made that, can I use the word, abortion – of my house – that big hole in the wall. I remember [REDACTED] was in charge in those days, and I remember in later life, I obviously got to look at the titles, just because of my job. And [REDACTED] had a wonderful way, he would find somebody who was relatively elderly living in a house, and say, 'Who owns this?' 'I don't know,' and he would give them a thing; the Burgh Council had the power – they were feudal – he gave them a thing called an anon title, which made them the owner, and then the Town Council bought it off them. So the Town Council gave them a title and then got it back, I thought that was a really shrewd move, 'cos I used that – not in the recent past – but where land ownership was problematic. But most of the top of the town, the old buildings; nobody would know who owned them. I mean, Green Lane, for example, who would own that? The Town Council now have it.

JMW: [Yes].

AH: I digress. When the District Council came along, obviously all the small Burghs felt like they were missing out. I think they did to a certain extent, because you started spending money on the bigger areas. I can't remember if Wigtown District Council built any – yes we did – we built some new houses in Whithorn. But the Town Council built most of the houses in Whithorn. The district would renovate some of them... oh, but it was the town that built Kilncroft, the Town Council that built Kilncroft, they had the Cruden's there already. The park was there. I think I'd be pushed to say Wigtown district built any houses, I don't think they did. I know Loreburn built houses after 1975, but I don't think the district built houses in Whithorn. Could be wrong

00:35:11

JMW: Did the Council have a prestige – the Town Council – was it looked up to? Or were people indifferent, as they often are, to local Government?

AH: I think there would be those who thought it was important, but most folk just got on with their lives, they were fairly indifferent to it. You see, we did organise things; Whithorn Civic Week, I've got real good memories of the times we had then. In that week, the town seemed to gel – it was really funny. The town seemed to gel. But then... people move on, and the old guard weren't there. Still tried to keep it running, but think it disappeared in the mists of time in the '80s, in the early 1980s. Course, most of these things did... I'm mean, we've still got the Galloway Pageant, that was a big thing for us. I remember going to the Galloway Pageant, it was a day out. We went on the bus and came back on the bus, but that was a day out for us. I don't see it featuring, other than for the people of Newton Stewart now. I mean in those days, people were coming for the Wigtown show – they used to come from all over the shire to go to these things. I'm not sure if they've got the same prestige as they had in the '60s or early '70s...

JMW: And the money to pay the Burgh officer and crew came from a rate?

AH: Yes, it would come from the rates that the Town Council would raise, they would also get fairly huge... Government subsidiaries. I mean, this was a Royal Burgh, but you could see how statures were reduced over the years, but there would be a Government grant; it would be the county Council that would raise the rates, and they would pay an amount to the Burgh Council. The Burgh wouldn't have the capacity or the capability to collect money. I mean, they collected the rents for their houses, Ron Marshall – for as long as I can remember, Ron Marshall was the clerk who collected the rents down in the office there. But no, they wouldn't have any, they wouldn't raise, collect rates – that would be done by the county Council, who would then pay the Burgh Council some money.

JMW: Right.

AH: My father's wage in 1972 was twenty quid a week, and he brought up me and my brother on that. My mother worked in the school kitchens, she was a – by that time... in fact, my mother worked in the school kitchens for a long time, she didnae go back to the buses. The buses were changing, and my mother left the buses to have me; when they were moving away from the old nationalised system, when the western S.N.T. were taking over. So, when we moved to the school, she got a part time job in the school kitchen, and she was there until 1974-75, maybe longer. And my sister worked there as well-

JMW: Aye-

AH: My sister got a job in the school kitchens as well, so dedication... But no, my recollection of the Burgh Council is that individually, they were all good meaning people. They were quite effective; they just worked along in their quiet way. I've no doubt they were eagles then as they are today! *(both laugh)* But I never really saw that side of it.

JMW: And they operated from the old town hall?

00:39:11

AH: The old town hall, yes, the Council chamber was in the old town hall, and then of course, it became the Masonic place. I think a lot of the Council's business would be done in The Grapes! *(both laugh)* Or wherever, public house... That was the flavour of the day. I think the one at the bottom, which I think had originally been The Railway Hotel, then became The Golf Hotel, when J. B. Kirkpatrick had it – and then latterly, The Black Hawk. I think they would meet in there as well. Although it didnae feature on my radar. But that seemed to be the place that they met.

JMW: And did you see the Provost wearing his robes, was there occasions when that happened?

AH: Do you know this, I don't ever think I saw the Provost of Whithorn wearing his robes. I remember seeing pictures of the Provost of Whithorn, particularly, 1953, when the Queen

came. But subsequently not, I don't remember... ever seeing the Town Council ever out, walking through the town, or anything like that. I don't think they were that flamboyant. I think they were all business people; they had the good of the community at heart... There wasnae a lot of the tradition or pomp and ceremony with them – I think they just got on with their daily lives.

JMW: And was there a ceremony – the Kirking of the Council – was that in existence?

AH: I don't remember Whithorn Burgh Council being Kirked. They may have been; I'd be very surprised if they were and I didn't know about it – as I say, my father was the Beadle - and I was a church [attendee], a very regular church [attendee], I was at church and Sunday school, right up until I went away to university. The first Kirking of the Council I remember was Wigtown district. I don't remember Whithorn ever being Kirked; it may have happened, it just didnae feature on my radar.

JMW: And what do you remember about church attendance?

AH: A lot higher than it is today, I would surmise... There were always the stalwarts there; the local teachers, the bank managers, the doctors... There were a lot of people that went to church. I think I saw the attendances start to drop off. I remember the Minister, Morrison, Angus Morrison. Angus did a lot of work in Whithorn, he had a youth club which he ran, at the manse, and he tried to bring the tap and the bottom thigither. That was one of Angus's things. And they had good church attendances in those days. The best church attendance was always the Christmas Eve service of course. Which, I think, eventually became something that went over the top, on a few occasions. Everybody went to church that night, well, I think that was just because it was something to do on Christmas Eve. No, there was a big Sunday school attendance, and the Sunday school used to run, every year, it had its play – its nativity play – and I remember we used to start practicing for that in October. It was Winnie Brock, and Betty Stewart, Greta was involved in it – my father. A lot of kids went to church – and the Roman Catholic church, likewise – it had a very healthy community.

JMW: Mmhmm, [yes].

AH: One of my memories Tony Sorianni and I were quite friendly, Anthony Sorianni and I were quite friendly, before he went off to St Joe's. We were at Whithorn primary.
00:43:41

AH: And I remember coming, Christmas again, and he disappeared. We were walking up George Street to go the church, and he disappeared. And I remember saying to my mother, 'I lost Tony!' And that was the first time I realised there were different churches. I think I realised there were maybe about seven or something like that. But I think that was rife in Whithorn as well, a lot more rife... it was probably under the surface, but the prejudice was there.

JMW: So, when I've been talking to people, I haven't come across much evidence of sectarian divide-

AH: No, I don't think it was sectarian, I think it was just a placid thing.

JMW: And what you would remember was the church here, not the tin church-

AH: I remember they built the new church... I think there was a few people in Whithorn, tradesmen, who actually did most of the work themselves. I think the church was built by local crafts people. Ben Wilma – Ben was very heavily involved in that. In the un-politically correct days, he was Ben the Pole. And funnily enough, a friend of mine's father was Peter the Pole, but he lived in Wigtown. Every community had its own Pole, apparently, but I didn't know that. Peter, my friend, is quite bitter about it... but Ben was a thriving businessman, I think he was one of the leading lights. But I do remember the old corrugated iron between Mulholland's shop, and the row of houses. And then the corrugated iron came down, and the Roman Catholic church appeared.

JMW: And do you remember Whithorn being a community that was centred on itself, in other words, people didn't go out to shop? It was self contained, as it were?

AH: No, as I said, I remember going to Miss Hannah's sweetie shop; there was shops, quite a number of shops in Whithorn. It was a community that had people coming in, the farming community would come to Whithorn. I mean if you would go to Newton Stewart, it involved almost an hour on the bus, and people just didn't have the transport. So yeah, I remember Whithorn when the local shops were doing quite good business... It was Jimmy Kerr's grocers shop at the bottom of the town, and you'd Miss Hannah, then a thriving baker shop... I've forgotten the name of the bakers.-

JMW: Well there was Denton's-

AH: Denton's. Denton was the name of the bakers, at the bottom of the square, and then there was Costly's, it was further up. You had – I even remember a food shop through the Port's Mouth, down from where The Calcutta is now. I'm trying to remember the old lady's name, she was famous in Whithorn...

JMW: Well, I'm certainly interviewing Betty Stewart, who remembers that part of the town; I think she talked about Miss B?

AH: Yes. Aye. I think Miss B was before her. Forgot, doesn't matter, but there was a food shop there.

00:47:32

AH: An, as I say, you really didn't think about going out of Whithorn. We used to go to the Isle, because that's where father came from, and that's where my grandfather lived, and my aunt, I had a... maiden aunt, who had been in service in Whithorn here, she worked for Brown and Charteris, when they had a big house in Whithorn and she was in service in the '30s here. She retired; she worked in Cornwall Park, was an old folks home in Newton Stewart. And she lived in Cornwall Park, and when she retired, she retired to the Isle. But

that's where we went Sunday afternoon, you got the bus to the Isle – that was your weekly treat. And my father basically went down to shave my grandfather, that's why we went to the Isle.

JMW: Right! *(both laugh)*

AH: And their house had no electricity or water... Their cottage, abiding memories of paraffin lamps; I was very young then, very young then.

JMW: In terms of civic life in Whithorn – I mean societies, clubs, past times, entertainments – was that also quite a vibrant [scene]?

AH: Extremely vibrant... there was table tennis club... in fact, we had some really good table tennis players. The table tennis club was where the old church hall used to be, in King's Road – sadly no longer. It was run by a guy called Miller, who was a teacher – he came from Garlieston. The table tennis club was a real thriving club, there was one guy in particular, Hamish Meoch – Hamish could have been playing nationally, but he never got the opportunity. Jim Norcoy, Knocky's son, was a great player as well. So there was table tennis, there was carpet bowls, there was badminton, there was the youth club. In fact, I think my mum and dad were out – my mother was in the Guild, she was in the Rural; in fact, she was the secretary of the Women's Guild in Whithorn for more years than I can remember. Because I remember my father helping her to write the minutes! Used to keep them for weeks, and then he'd have to write a minute! *(laughs)*

JMW: [Yes], mmhmm.

AH: My dad had enjoyed a drink in his earlier life, and that was his relief on a Saturday night. He used to go to the front bar at The Grapes. That's where he went every Saturday night. My aunt would come in from the Isle on the bus, and give me a half crown, that was my pocket money in those days; I'd gone up from thruppence to half a crown, but I would be twelve, thirteen – fourteen. But she would come in on the bus, would have her tea, and then when the bus left to go to the Isle at nine o'clock at night, my father would walk down to The Grapes, the front bar, and he would drink- there's another name – Jock Galloway. Jock and he were very friendly. And Jock, he used to meet up on a Saturday night for an hour and twenty minutes, or whatever, and have a drink. There was no alcohol in the house. Christmas, tell a lie – there would be alcohol in the house at Christmas, but during the year, [no]. And it wisnae something that you would automatically do; I mean people come in now, they'll have a glass of wine, unheard of in those days. Well, certainly in the circles I moved in. I don't know about other people, presumably there were. But it was unheard of in our house, except for a special occasion, or certainly Christmas, New Year, there was always a bottle. And we also got – all our clothes were bought locally, or out of a club book. I think that was another thing about this area. The Highlands, there were people, George Ingles, he worked freelance. But he ran the club books, he would go round.

00:52:07

AH: I remember before Christmas, much excitement for George Ingles – and John Allan used to arrive with their club books. And folk would be paying for that all year; they would get it

at Christmas, and they would just get it paid by the time that next Christmas came along, to start the cycle again. That was a great excitement, when the club books arrived. Of course, things have moved on since then, but that would be in the mid '60s. After that, getting to the '70s I could actually see a change in my way of life. The '60s just seemed to be very, very harsh and very hard. You come into the '70s – maybe of course just because I was older – but I could see a subtle change in the kind of clothes that were bought, how frequently the clothes were bought, and things like that.

JMW: And do you remember the layout of the top of the town before the redevelopment, before the scheme, that I think Anthony Wolfe was involved with?

AH: Yes, very vaguely... Where the entrance to Kilncroft is, there was a market garden in there. I remember the market garden, I remember the Heath Pump, and the Windmill Stump, vaguely, and the big tank, very vaguely. I don't know if they're still there, but I remember that sort of layout. The Cruden's were always there in my time; that's what Wigtown District did, we modernised the Cruden's... They were called the Cruden's-

JMW: Still are, I think-

AH: Aye probably, yeah, and the park! Was originally St Ninian's, I think, but it was always just called the park. I remember it vaguely. I remember a boy who, (*I think he was in the force with me?*) He had only one arm, a stump. He had small holding there... That would be at the time when I was growing up at the top of the town, because my granny was in the Cruden's...

JMW: I've seen a nineteenth century photograph of High Street, and it's actually very beautiful, or at least I viewed it as beautiful, maybe it wasn't to live in. But there were small cottages with big slabs at the front. Was some of that still there?

AH: ... The High Street hasnae changed- well, where I was in 2 High Street, there was a row of houses there, and you had to go up stairs to them, I remember those. Our next door neighbour was Willie Smith, his son's still alive I think. Willie worked at the creamery. And they used to call him Sir Echo. 'Cos he whistled *Sir Echo, How Do You Do* all the time! (*Both laugh*) Which was quite annoying! But they were our next door neighbours in High Street. But vaguely, yes, I do remember High Street when it was like that. I also remember the rows of houses in Isle Street in Glasserton Street; and there was a garage, at the top of Glasserton Street, Kelly's Garage. And the bus garage was up there – that's right, the bus garage was up there, onto Glasserton Street, I think. It then moved down the bottom of town when... the renovated new building [opened].

JMW: Right. How did people feel about the redevelopment at the top of the town, did they welcome it?

AH: I think they did... My sister moved into one of the first houses in Kilncroft, and they were desperate for a house. People were still living in private, rented accommodation... And it would be like just in the cities, only this was in the '70s.

00:56:44

AH: The potential of having a bath and shower, centrally heated houses – people were just desperate to get in. That's my memory, anyway. And as I say, I remember my sister, must have been more than forty years ago now, my sister moved into one of the first ones. And she's still there! In Kilncroft. In fact, I think a lot of her neighbours are still the same neighbours that she had. I know they are... I think, reflecting on it... It was a good development, but they made a terrible mess of the top of the town; it's a dreadful place. Right through where my living room was!...

JMW: So, tell me how you became involved with Wigtown District Council?

AH: Right, again, I'm going to go back. When I was younger... I was maybe fifteen, I used to help my dad painting. You used to do what you call Homers. You work during the day for the Town Council, and then if Mrs McQuaffle wanted her livingroom papered, we would do that – and obviously, we would get paid for it. I remember we were at Balsmith Farm, which is out on the back road to The Isle of Whithorn. And going by Peter Vance; it was being decorated, they were doing the farmhouse up – because Sinclair had just got married to Anne; and they were moving into Balsmith, they were going to farm Balsmith. So my father and I were there a long time, we were there nights and weekends. And I remember Peter saying to me, 'what are you going to dae wi yourself boy?' And my father immediately, 'Oh, I think he's going to work in the bank.' And Peter Vance says; 'Ha, that's a waste o time, there's nae money in the banks. Gets away ti university.' (*Alex apologises for almost 'rearing' Julia with his arm movement.*) So, then we got on the track, I became a lawyer. Bill Ray influenced that, quite considerably. Went to university, and was looking for a job – in those days, legal apprentices, as it was called in private practices would have paid about five hundred, six hundred pounds a year? An I spied an advert on the wall in the university for a legal apprentice, for Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council, which was paying around seventeen hundred pounds per annum. And I thought Dumfries, that's fairly near Whithorn, innit? So I'll go there. So I applied for the job, got in to the director of admin David Lyle, worked for Dumfries and Galloway Council for two years. Finished my apprenticeship – got the impression their wisnae even a job for me – so I started to apply for jobs, and one came up at Wigtown. So I applied for the Wigtown District job and was successful in getting it. I remember Ian Drape, who was a councillor at the time, and Ian had to decline the interview. He declared an interest, all those years ago! And declined the interview. But I moved to Stranraer; I thought, och, this'll do me for four or five years, and I moved, [and I've now moved]. Well I work in Dumfries now and again, but I never moved from Stranraer. So I've worked in local Government in Dumfries and Galloway since 1975. For my sins.

JMW: So clearly, there's an absolutely massive shift from Whithorn - having its own central Government, its own rates – to where we are now. How do you think that's effected a little place like Whithorn?

AH: I think it's had, I'm going to be perfectly honest here, it's had a detrimental effect on Whithorn. I think often [due to] necessity, councils work on the basis of strategy and policy, and sometimes that means that places like Whithorn do loose out. I think that Whithorn had its own identity in the '70s, certainly in the '60s and '70s. There's been a move away – but how much of that is down to the fact that local Government has moved further away, and

how much of it is just down to the fact that the world has moved on – I'd need somebody to reflect that with me and have a long discussion about that.

01:01:53

AH: But I certainly do think Whithorn does not have the same attention paid to it. And I gave you the same example of the weeds, around the War Memorial, and just the general condition of the streets... I think every now and again, big Government does something that has an effect on a small community, and big Government has the ability to do that. If Dumfries and Galloway wants a couple of million quid, they can do it – in the Town Council days, they didnae have that, but what they had was the revenue to make sure the place was kept looking smart, neat and tidy. And of course, it had its own Court as well, the Burgh Bailiffs and the Burgh Magistrates. But that was a really interesting time. How someone could sit in judgement of someone in such a small community. I remember my father got fined six shillings, I think it was, for allowing his chimney to go on fire. He allowed the chimney to go on fire, and he got a fine from the Burgh court. But I would have really been interested to see how that worked; because I when I came to Wigtown, I ran the Justices Court for Wigtown District... And I sometimes really felt that people sitting on the bench were a wee bit close to things, shall we say. Maybe that was a good thing, maybe it wisnae. It was when the late Sam Watson, who was a grocer in Sorbie; Sam was a G.P. and Sam was a green stick... mind you, a really good G.P. But when he brought the accused over from Sorbie in his car! You started to wonder, is this a good idea?! (*both laugh*) I'll never forget that! And then there was an occasion when somebody was done for selling alcohol after time, and it was a great long trail, and the licensee knew that they could lose their livelihood - so they had a QC appearing in the District Court. After the trial, I'm tidying up the- the chap was found not proven- and this G.P. said to me, 'that'll be the dearest half Angus has ever served in his life.' 'Sorry, sir, what do you mean?' 'I was there!' He'd been sitting in the pub the night the guy- sat and judged him! (*both laugh*) It's these things things that make you go uuh?-

JMW: Mmhmm-

AH: So sometimes small is not beautiful. Altogether. No, I think, by and large the world has changed; we talked about it earlier on, new technology. The internal combustion engine. It signalled that things were going to change in Whithorn. I think the freedom of movement by way of vehicles – cars – I mean, I was saying to my son, comin over the back road from Port William, past... I was trying to name all the farms, that's my party trick, trying to name all the farms as we were goin past them! And I was tellin him that when I, before I went to university, I was Army Cadets. And at one time, I thought about a military career – but the guy who ran the Military Cadets was Ian Aiken, and he farmed at East Kilbarack. Which is away, the other side of (?) Hill.

JMW: Yeah, I know where that is actually, strangely.

AH: I worked for him in my first long holiday between leaving school and going to university, I cycled there, and that was in the '70s. Because it was the only way to get there. Eventually, I became a bit wiser, and a guy called Jimmy Hannah from the Isle was workin at Richardson's at (*Hope?*) Hill. So I left my bike at Richardson's Garage at (?) Hill, and got a lift

with him, But for the first fortnight, I cycled. And I had intended to cycle everyday: it was a twenty five mile-round trip. So, things were, even in the '70s, things were not absolutely perfect. But, as I say, technology, the world has moved on.

JMW: You talked- before we started recording – you talked a little bit about the families that you knew, and the times of kinship and knowing everybody.

01:06:35

JMW: Can you say a bit about the important families that you know in Whithorn, and can remember? In Whithorn?

AH: The important families... Obviously, the bank managers were very important people. I remember the Hannah's, who had the National Commercial Bank. And then there was a guy called James Mayor, who moved into the National Commercial Bank. There was the Clydesdale... the Wylie's. The local doctor, Findlay. Dr Robertson who was in the Isle, but he practiced in Whithorn. The Arnot's – Provost Arnot had a shop. Greta Hawthorne had the newsagents. I'm trying to remember her married name; she was a Hawthorne, but... The Howlitt's, the Mulholland's, they had a clothes shop. The Kinnear's, of course. Local farmers: the Vance's, the Forsyth's... But then there were the other people, the people who were in the community. Ian Drape, Archie Taylor. Dare I say, my father? The Stewart's, the builders; the Wilson's were the joiners. An then the bus drivers; Macauley, Jack Macauley, Jimmy Hughes, I've mentioned. The local policemen, they were always very up in the community. Greenhorne: I remember Scott, when he was the Sergeant, his daughters used to take me for walks – I don't know what ever happened to these lassies? He was the Sergeant here, then he was downgraded, and we had two Constables... An' big Willie Adamson, he was a real character, tell you a story about him... I don't know if I should be talking about this! Willie, we knew we were getting a new cap – there was a new policeman coming. So we were sittin in the back bar of The Grapes, John Keith was behind the bar, and so was wee Mag Kilty. And I was sittin with some of the worthies – clutching my (?) with a couple of other guys. This character came in, and he said tae wee Mag, 'pour me a pint of Guinness.' And he just let it sit. And then I think he drank five pints of Guinness, one after the other. He'd a found-and-a-half bunnet on, and a Tweed suit. He would have killed a lesser mortal, he was a huge man. Anyway, that was fine. Ten past ten, the door opens, the cap comes in – and Willie had been a Guardsman, he wore his cap right down over his nose. 'It's shuttin time, get oot!' So he downed his pints, went to put his uniform on and went back to work out the pub! That is a true story, anecdotally, it's been told many ways. But I was there that night, I saw that happening; he really didnae drink six pints, or five pints, but he did come in, the other cap. He was quite a character, Willie. But the other families that I knew, I mean the Couch's, I was very friendly with the Couch's. Got on very well when we were at school together, Winnie brought Jonnie: Johnnie, unfortunately, he was the B.T. engineer, before it was B.T; Johnnie died very young. Murray McGee, who had the electrical shop, you know McGee?

JMW: Mmhmm, yep.

AH: In fact, I still see them. But there was a real load of worthies in those days. I mentioned the McShean family were all great dairy folk. They were all dairymen. Jimmy was at Chapel

Outon, Laurence was at Port Yerrock, Jock was a burgh foreman at one time – Jock McShean. Jock's daughters did very well, I think one of them's a councillor in Edinburgh: so they moved away from the town very early. The Chamberlain's of course, who had the cinema, I remember going to the cinema. It was a Saturday afternoon job as well, when I was younger... Davison's, the painters... The names, there's just loads of people. You knew everybody and everybody knew you. I remember getting into trouble for skrimping apples out of the doctor's garden. We were at the old tennis courts, at the bottom of St John Street, and Dr Findlay had the bottom part of the house – it was the McKeen's that were up above.

01:11:55

AH: Sheila McKeen, yeah. She was a Wylie, but married name was McKeen. I was at school with her daughters. And I'd been skrimping apples, and somebody had seen me! So next time my father knew about it – the police never game me a ticking off, but my father gave quite a smacking. Because you got a smack if you did something wrong in my day; you got a smack round the ear, that was it! Nobody thought anything about it. But no, we used to get up to all sorts, but everybody knew one another. You felt quite comfortable, part of the community.

JMW: And that's when the police station was down St John Street? Down that way?-

AH: Yeah, the police station was at the back of where Billy Lyon's is now, but Bill bought The Neuk - that was where the rat catcher- the mole catcher – lived in that house!... And I remember, he used to wear moleskin... Yeah, police station was down the back there, next to St John's Park.

JMW: Was there actually a holding cell there?

AH: There was a cell there, yes.

JMW: Still in use?

AH: It would be in use, yes, they'd [be] nowhere else to put you. I don't think it would be frequently in use, maybe on a Friday or a Saturday night, when somebody had too much of the jungle juice – decided they were going to have a domestic or a fight with somebody on the street, so they would be used.

JMW: And the Burgh Court would have met at the old town hall building?

AH: I think the Burgh Court would meet at the old town hall building, yes.

JMW: I mean, it's really a continuous tradition from medieval times; you've got that centre of justice and administration. And then in '75-

AH: It all stopped... And the Government – and this is with due respect to all community councillors – the Government, in an effort to get the act through Parliament, to make sure

there wasn't a huge [outcry], set up community councils. When you look at section 52 and 53 of The Local Government Scotland Act, which set up community councils, they didn't put a lot of thought into it, all the thinking has been subseed in. Yeah, it was the laws of a tradition. I was away from Whithorn when it happened. My first day at work was the 15th of May, 1975. Which was the day Local Governments reorganised in Scotland- yeah, for the first time. So, I was away, so wasn't really aware of its going – I know the toon council had a wager on the back of it! Cos John Wilson told me about it! (*laughs*) He may deny it! But he did tell me about it. They had quite a time to themselves, to celebrate the end of an era. But whether people in Whithorn noticed it – I don't think they even mourned it. There may have been one or two people in the community who thought, 'this is no gonna be a good thing.' But I don't think anybody mourned it. People don't notice.

JMW: No-

01:15:27

AH: I still get stopped in Stranraer, I walk down the town in Stranraer and I still get stopped and asked about council issues. And I never... This rather elderly lady shouted, 'Hey son! Do you still work fir the toon?' (*both laugh*) An I said, 'I still work for the council aye, but there's no been a toon since 1975!' And she was goin back- and they still talk about the toon in Stranraer, they don't so much here?-

JMW: No.-

AH: They do, they still talk about the toon in Stranraer. So if you work for the council, there's an assumption you work for the toon. Which you don't. It just shows how people's minds go back. Structures have changed, I mean we did the large scale transfer of the housing stock to D.G.H.P., people are still coming to the council about housing. And you've got to say, 'no, sorry. The council hasnae control of that housing for ten years now. Yer a D.G.H.P. tenant.' ... So people's perceptions maybe. It's what it's all about.

JMW: Yes. And when you come to Whithorn now, how different is it?

AH: Well, number one, as I say, its perhaps not as well maintained as it could be. I have fond memories – I was driving up the town there, and I was looking at the shops, an the people, and I'm thinking: I don't know many people now. The annoying thing is that I can probably recognise a lot of faces. But they're probably two generations down from when I was in Whithorn. Most of the people I knew, well they still have family here, the people I grew up with, most of them are away from Whithorn now. Quite difficult to identify. There was more than three quarters of the people I knew in Whithorn, in my parts of Whithorn, aren't here. Maybe more than that. It would certainly be upwards of seventy five, maybe ninety percent. Because they move on. And some people used to come back, but I don't think people are coming back now – maybe sound a terrible thing, but I coudnae settle in Whithorn... I think too many things have changed.

JMW: Is part of it the sort of webs of kinship that don't exist [as much]-

AH: They don't exist, no... I come, infrequently, to see my sister. I'll come to funerals. My memory of Whithorn's weddings and Christenings. No funerals. And that's sad, that's a personal reflection. I couldn't settle, I just wouldnae- because I'd be looking for something that I'm never going to get back. Can never get back, which is a shame. But my sister wouldnae move, I mean, she's been here all her life.

JMW: And the Burgh Council employed, what, four people?

AH: I think there were about six. The refuge guy, the labourer; McGinn, Steele, Norcoy, McWilliam, my father, and a foreman.

JMW: And Dumfries and Galloway Council employs?

AH: Eight thousand. *(both laugh)*... The turnover is three hundred and sixty odd million a year, the turnover of Dumfries and Galloway Council, a huge organisation. Not the biggest in Scotland, but a big organisation when you compare it with Whithorn Burgh.

01:19:51

JMW: Yes, that's quite a thought. So are you optimistic for the future of small towns like this, or do you think they've got a lot of challenges ahead?

AH: I think they do face challenges, but I think communities will always survive. I mean Wigtown District Council, and Wigtown County Council wrote off Elrig, and they wrote off New Luce,. Now you look at the community Elrig has now – okay, there's not a lot of shops and things like that, but it's got a community. And New Luce is the same, they've just opened a community shop in New Luce. So I think, yes, as a community, Whithorn will survive, and it may not thrive as well as one may like it to – but it will survive. Broadband should help – it should help local businesses, it should help people. And we're getting to the stage now where, when you look at the big shopping areas in some of the less visited towns, I'm thinking places like Paisley – I mean the centre of Paisley is like a desert a lot of the time. The number of closed shops. Cumbernauld – huge shopping centre at Cumbernauld, every second unit's empty. Or you got charity shops. Dumfries and Stranraer are both the same; charity shops and hairdressers. Take up a lot of the space on what was the retail part of the town. Never be replaced. Our association with alcohol has changed, to such an extent that the local pubs are changing. There's no the pub culture there was in the '60s. You used to go to The Railway Inn for the company. It's gone... But my pint is always half full, I think this community will survive. I think it will become a different type of community. But it will survive. The population's aging, it's a known fact. The demographics in Dumfries and Galloway are horrendous, when you look at them just now. So, Whithorn will be no different soon. But there always families who will stay in Whithorn, they will never move.

JMW: Do you think the opportunities that you had still exist for kids here, or do you think it's a tougher climb?

AH: I don't think it's a tougher climb, I think the opportunities are still there, I think the education system which we have – I would say this of course – but I think the education

system which we now have far surpasses the system that I was brought through. The community's less divided between working class and middle class – there's been a smudging of the edges, a buffing of the edges, so I think yes... I'd be quite upbeat for the future of anyone who'd come out of Whithorn, provided they'd put the effort into it – and I think that's the big issue. That maybe sounds arrogant, and I hope it doesn't sound arrogant. If you take your chances, and you put some effort into it, you can still move on. People are proving that every day. When I first went to Dumfries, there was nobody apart from people from Dumfriesshire that worked for the Regional Council. I'm now able to say- in fact, they did the other day there- the guys from Stranraer outnumbered the guys from anywhere else in Scotland. So there are opportunities still for people who are prepared to go there and get on with it.

JMW: And what do you think are the biggest challenges facing the region? That's a big question.

AH: That's a big question. Employability, unemployment, the aging population... I think broadband, and the extension to broadband will widen our horizons, it will enable people who want to live in a rural economy, to work out-with that economy. So I think, as the demographic changes, we're going to need to employ people to do different things. I think we need to look seriously at our healthcare, our care in the community.

01:25:23

AH: That's a challenge in itself. We're about to look at the integration of healthcare and social care-social work in the health board- as far as adults are concerned. So there will be changes there. We are finding it increasingly difficult to find employment for people, I think it's not helped sometimes by the politics. Recently, we had a planning application for a fairly major development – turned down. I'm not saying you give everybody planning permission just for the sake of it, but I think you've actually got to think seriously about [it]. I've been doing a piece of work recently in (?), where the coal mining industry has just gone. We're trying to revive that. But I think those are the main challenges facing people in Dumfries and Galloway, going forward. I think there's a lot of positives in Dumfries and Galloway. I think we could encourage our tourists a lot more. I think there is a need for us to build the infrastructure for tourism – we have pockets of tourists, but we don't have the infrastructure there. If you go out on a Sunday afternoon, you can't go into a shop and buy a cup of coffee. And then people say, 'we don't get tourists.' That's why you don't get tourists, because you don't cater for them! If you got a pub, got a hotel, you got to do food – but it's a chicken and egg situation, isn't it, how do you work that? You need to have the tourists before you get the infrastructure, but you need the infrastructure to attract the tourists.

JMW: Well, we've covered a wide variety of things, is there's something that I've missed asking you that you think you would like to-

AH: No, I think we've covered a fair amount of ground. Some of the families I didn't mention, you mentioned yourself: the Jolly family, they have run a haulage business – I don't know how that haulage business ever survived, but they were very successful in running that haulage business – from Whithorn! Your first eighteen, nineteen miles is

wasted! But, the Lyon's family, the Keltimore families, the Bodle families. That you mentioned; they were big, big families... They've probably grown, I don't know, they've probably grown considerably!... And that's the other thing that's not the norm, it was not unusual for families of ten, eleven, twelve kids. In fact, the family that, there was the Brawlsie's – I've forgotten the name of the other family – but the town council actually built them a special house up where Kelly's Garage was, a big house. And that was built specifically for that one particular family, because they were in The Park, and they just outgrew the house... But no, I think hopefully, it's been helpful-

JMW: Oh, absolutely-

AH: It's certainly given me food for thought. Because I don't think I've actually ever sat down and thought about Whithorn in a concentrated way before, so thank you very much for the opportunity.

JMW: No, no. Thank you. It's been great. It's a whole other aspect, you know, the civic and the administrative side, so. That's great, well that you!