

Interviewee: Mrs McShane (AH)	Interviewer: Julia Muir Watt (JMW)
Date of Interview: 31 October 2013	Ref: DG4-28-1-1-T

JMW: My name is Julia Muir Watt, it's the 31st of October, and I'm interviewing Mrs McShean in the Isle of Whithorn. So, do you want to tell me something about where you were brought up?

McS: Well, I was born at what is now the Sawmill cottages at Glasserton, and they belonged to the family... They used to be in Craigmeline... Who were they now, they were lovely people-

JMW: -It's not Parlan, is it?

McS: Parlan, yes. Oh I nearly had it there- Palmer.

JMW: Palmer? Okay, right.

McS: They have it now. It was two cottages in my time, and I was born there. It was two cottages, but since they bought it, it was knocked into the one house.

JMW: Is that the white cottage?

McS: Just off the road, yes. That's where I started off. Then [when] I was about six years old, my father was the head gardener on Glasserton estate. He was the head gardener for the mansion house, which was in operation then. We moved from Sawmill cottages to the garden house itself. Then the previous head gardener moved, down to Carlisle direction, and my father was promoted to head gardener – he had five other gardeners under him. Now they call it Woodfall, of course, but in these days, it was just Glasserton gardens. So, the mansion house of course was in operation then, it was Robin's grandfather, [he] was there:- he was Admiral Robert Johnston Stewart.

JMW: How much did you see of him?

McS: Oh, well, quite a bit. He was always there. But he was not intrusive, not at all; he was very respectful for his workers... I remember him quite fondly. You know Woodfall Gardens, you've been to Woodfall Gardens?

JMW: Yes, yes.

McS: In the first garden, that was absolutely beautiful, because that was all flowers. Flower beds, of all shapes, these were absolutely beautiful. And the orchard was at the top of this garden, it's still there. At the orchard, there was a door leading in to the garden. Every afternoon, weather permitting- even if it wasn't good weather – the Admiral walked from the mansion house, but he came into the gardens, through that top door. But he never passed our house, our door. That's the sort of person that he was.

JMW: Ah, right.

McS: Then of course, well of course... when you see Downton Abbey, do you watch that on the television?

00:03:45

JMW: I know what you mean, I don't watch it, but yes I do-

McS: But you know what I mean, that's the sort of style it was. There was a butler, and there was maids, cooks and housekeepers, and a' the rest of it.

JMW: And do you remember any of them, who were they?

McS: Yes, I remember two cooks; Mrs Forbes, was one. I don't know if they were Mrs, they tended to take the title Mistress. You know, if they weren't married, that's the way they were referred to. But there was Mrs Forbes, and then there was Miss Robb, and she retired to the Isle of course. I remember these two. There was some nice maids, some young girls. There was two in particular came; they were Mrs Forbes' nieces, and they came from the Outer Hebrides. She brought them down to work in the mansion house. I remember one was called Joanne- Furlow, was their name, but they were no connected to local family.

JMW: Uh-huh, yes.

McS: Then of course, in 1940, the Admiral died... the mansion house was requisitioned for the military. Unfortunately, a lot of stuff was lost – at one point there was a fire; well, they weren't very careful about anything. But there was a lot of military passed through there.

JMW: So what kind of a military outfit was it, were they training there?-

McS: They were training there, yes. They were training there, they'd be billeted there, and they'd be training up at Burrow Head. The air force guys were at Kildale.

JMW: Yes, and do you remember seeing them?

McS: Oh yes, yes.

JMW: And was it RAF or army as well?

McS: I would say more army than anything else. I remember my father got quite friendly with some of them, you know. And the officers were lovely, there were some very nice people. They were quite kind to us, with chocolate when nobody else had it! (*laughs*)... But I remember it would be '42, '43, when my father, we used to talk about it afterwards, that's what it was. He had been told, in the morning of that day, that we'd be moving out, one of the officers said; 'We're moving out, we're moving out through the night.' And actually, they went to fight in North Africa; part of the North African campaign. I remember- quite vividly -

my father and my two elder brothers went to the road end to see them pass by... So, then what happened after that? Well, the war came to an end, and Robin's father didn't come home then, he came home a few years later than that. But there was a housekeeper, a sort of caretaker and his wife: and their name was Jamieson. And I've spoken to the Laird when he was asking me about things, and he could tell me that Morley Jamieson is actually a playwright, and he's still going strong.

JMW: Right, goodness!

00:08:01

McS: But Robin would be able to tell you a bit more than that. He certainly did a real radio play at one time, and it was entitled *Cherry Valley*, which is the name for Glasserton-

JMW: Oh, that's interesting. Going back to your father, and working as a gardener, did he start as an apprentice there?

McS: Yes, yes, he started as an apprentice, leaving school at fourteen-

JMW: Right, and was he at Whithorn school, or?-

McS: He was at Whithorn school, yes. He was... My father was a very clever man. Very 'now', you know? There wasn't the money in those days to take education any further – but he was a very clever man. He was a Latin scholar.

JMW: Was he?

McS: Yes-

JMW: And did he get that at Whithorn school?-

McS: Yes, aye-

JMW: Goodness!

McS: Yes, it's hard to believe, isn't it?!

JMW: Yes, it is it is.

McS: He was on Burns, he was very knowledgeable about Burns. He used to address the haggis, and he did Tam O' Shanter, right up until he died in 1977.

JMW: Right. So, did he live in when he was an apprentice, or did he go from the town?

McS: Well he would come from the town, but next to the gardeners' house, where we lived, was what was called the bothay, and some of the younger ones slept in the bothay.

JMW: Yes. All his training was given to him by a senior gardener, was it?

McS: Oh yes, uh-huh.

JMW: Do you remember any of the names of the senior gardeners?

McS: Mr Hamilton, I remember him. He went to... Lonsdale, in Carlisle? He went to this place, he left Glasserton and went there. Because the writing was on the wall by then, we knew that the mansion house wasn't going to go on. So that's where he went, that was in the later stages of the war... And that's when we moved over to Glasserton, to the gardeners'.

JMW: So, ultimately, your father was in charge of all the others?

00:10:31

McS: Yes, yes he was.

JMW: And he had to train them presumably?...-

McS: Yes, uh-huh.

JMW: Were they asked to wear a uniform, or was it generally just occupational [wear]?

McS: Just occupational, yes. I think they wore their own clothes – I don't remember a uniform at all.

JMW: And that would be restricted in the house, perhaps?

McS: Yes, oh yes, they were in their snow-white aprons.

JMW: Do you remember the butlers' lodge being occupied?

McS: Yes, I do. What a shame, what an absolute shame.

JMW: Was it really the butler who lived in there, or was it-

McS: No, it wasn't really. [That] would be lost in the myths of time, I suppose! The butler would be there at one point. But my recollections aren't of the butler being there. It was just a worker. That was a lovely house – it was the only house on the estate that had running water! I'll always remember that. It was a tremendous garden; what a beautiful garden it was. But that was a stipulation by the Laird, that everybody kept their garden.

JMW: Right. I remember seeing photographs of... Glasserton House, and it had terraces.

McS: Terraces, uh-huh, beautiful terraces. And monkey puzzle trees. Lovely.

JMW: And do you remember much about the equipment your father used? I mean nowadays, it'll all be power tools?

McS: Oh aye, that sort of thing. No, it was just graip and spade.

JMW: Lots of manpower.

McS: A lot of manpower, yes!

JMW: And were you ever told anything about what your father's wages were?

McS: Yes, I can tell you what my father's wages were. I've heard him saying this. Thirty five shillings a week, when we were living in where I was born, in the cottages, and they went up to two pounds, when we moved to Glasserton Gardens.

JMW: Was that considered quite good?

McS: Oh that was quite good yes...

00:13:00

JMW: And how many of you were there in the Sawmill cottage?

McS: Well, there was four of us at Sawmill cottages, and then when we moved to the gardens there was two more, two brothers – both dead.

JMW: Your mother; did she work, or did she just look after the family?

McS: She just looked after the family. She picked fruits in season, she did that sort of thing. She harvested the crops. And part of their remit, which they were allowed to do was pull the snowdrops – that was quite a big thing in those days.

JMW: I've heard that they went for the train in Whithorn?-

McS: Yes, they went for the train in Whithorn. Then of course when Mr Beecham took the trains off, a lorry used to come round, which was employed by British Rail; a lorry came round and picked them up. Pick the boxes up.

JMW: And what about a walled garden? Was there anything like that at Glasserton?

McS: Oh it's all walled garden... Because there was peaches, and plums and figs, grew a lot in the walls... actually, part of the inside walls were hearted: there was two stoke walls, we called them, because we got the lovely job on a Sunday afternoon of stoking them up... Yes, there was two-three – greenhouses at the top garden, and another vinery down where the third garden, where the bottom garden is. There was fireplaces to heat the wa'. A lot of work-

JMW: A lot of work, I'm sure. Were those fruits to supply the main house?

McS: Yes, aye, they were. Beautiful grapes. The green ones and the back ones... And Glasserton tomatoes were famous.

JMW: And did your father take his orders from the house?

McS: Oh yes – the order probably came down the day before they wanted it. And we had, my brother and I, we took them, the baskets up- and we delivered them to, I'd say the back door, but that's not what they called it, the *hall* door. We were invited into the kitchen until we unloaded the baskets and all the rest of it. An' we always got something, maybe a rock bun- it wasn't very much – but we always got a wee treat. You know, from either Mrs Forbes or Miss Robb.

JMW: Right. So what do you remember about the kitchen?

McS: Oh, well, just yer big kitchen; everything was big, you know. Everything's big when you're young and small. I've told Robin about this often – we went to the hall door, and somebody rang the bell, and somebody came; and of course we were taken through to the kitchen. But along this long corridor were glass cases, I've told Robin about them. They were full of china and glass, and everything glistened, you know. It was absolutely gorgeous.

00:17:24

McS: Because we were in the cottage, and it was pretty ordinary for us, it was just wonderful. I've told Robin about it, and he says, 'where did it all go?' There was nothing when he took over. But of course, as I say, the military had took over before he came back. There was a lot of destruction.

JMW: Yes, I remember hearing that from Robin's mother.

McS: Oh, yes.

JMW: So how many people do you think were running [it] in terms of staff, how many people do you think were running Glasserton?

McS: On the estate? Well, I've told you, five, six, were in the gardens... There was woodcutters, you know. You're talking maybe forty, easily.

JMW: And would some of the maids live in?

McS: Yes, yes. All of them, I expect.

JMW: Would they likely to be from Whithorn?

McS: There would be, yes. I don't remember any from Whithorn – they were all strangers as far as I can remember. I think there probably were some from Whithorn.

JMW: Do you remember them wearing uniforms?

McS: Oh yes, black dresses, and there was always these long snowy white aprons.

JMW: And do you remember who was the butler?

McS: No, no I don't. Would only just be another person! No... I remember Jimmie Hughes, was that before your time coming?

JMW: I think so.-

McS: Jimmy Hughes.

JMW: I sort of vaguely know the name?-

McS: He'd be related to Greta.

JMW: Oh right, okay.

McS: Well, he was chauffer... He started off with carts, you know, it would be. But he was chauffer.

JMW: So tell about the layout; because there's a certain amount that survives back there, and it's been a while since I've been back, but I can remember there was a dovecot?

00:20:00

McS: Yes, there was a dovecot. That was at the home farm. Aye. There was quite a few houses round about there, because there was stables. And that was the family, Hughes. That was quite a big family lived there, at the stables... You went up a lot of steps and there were flats that people lived in. Two flats.

JMW: Was the estate... did it produce a lot of what it needed just on the estate?

McS: Yes, it did, during the Admiral's time it did. Then when he died, Robin's farther was a bit tardy turning up. (*laughs*) Then the estate of course was put under trustees. And actually, it remained there until young Robin came.

JMW: And can you tell me about that? Why did that happen?

McS: Well, Julia, that's quite a difficult- we know why that happened. I don't know if I should talk about it... The Laird, the Admiral, loved his church, he loved Glasserton church and... Robin's father strayed from the Presbyterian church. You know that?

JMW: Yes, I've heard that.

McS: That's when, before he died, he put the estate under trustees.

JMW: How did people see that, outside the family, did they think that was fair? Or did they think it was a bit unfair?

McS: No, I think at the time it was quite fair. It was wise. (*Julia interrupts, but encourages Mrs McShean to go on*) If it had skipped a generation, possibly, and landed on Robin's lap then. It might have been different. But his father was a different kettle of fish.

JMW: So I've heard the Admiral was quite strong on encouraging people to go to church?

McS: Oh, yes, yes.

JMW: Did you go to the Glasserton church?

McS: Yes.

JMW: Right, and was that full?

McS: Oh it was... Because if you hadn't been there on Sunday, he'd have been around to see what kept you. Either he or the minister:- and the minister at that time, for a long, long time, was John Schoolar's father. But you'll know that?

JMW: Yes, yes.

McS: He was a lovely person. He was in the First World War, and he was badly gassed... Oh no, we had to turn out on a Sunday.

00:23:43

JMW: And did you mind, or did you quite-

McS: Oh no, not at all. It was just a thing that you did, yes. My father himself was quite attached to the church. He was Beadle in Glasserton church for fifty years.

JMW: The Beadle; is that church discipline and that sort of thing?

McS: Yeah, the church officer, I think they call it now.

JMW: Did he take collection, or was-

McS: No, that was as it was, it was the elders job then... He looked after the church itself, he and my mother... And they take the minister in, that was his job – looked after the communion glasses and all that sort of thing.

JMW: And did you all dress up for Sunday?

McS: Oh yes. You had your everyday stuff, and then you had your Sunday coat.

JMW: Do you remember much about the farmyard and how the home farm worked?

McS: Well, it was leased of course. In my day, aww, he must have been there for long, long- Henry Hall had it. You know Helen Hall in Whithorn? Her husband was his nephew. He had it. It was a good farm, certainly farmed it well... But there was a lot of ground, (*place name*)

belongs to the estate. Before Robin came home, quite a few of the farms were sold off; two Ursocks' and Arbrook. The (*Roofin'*), but he's got all that back now himself.

JMW: And were you ever up inside the mian part of Glasserton House?

McS: Yes, well, that's where we had our Sunday school picnic; we were taken up to the big house and allowed to run riot! (*laughs*) Roll down the terraces. Yes, it was good, it was a nice little life. But as I say, the war changed everything...

JMW: So were you going to school in Whithorn?

McS: Yes, in Whithorn. Although there was a school in Glasserton.

JMW: Now, where was that in the village?

McS: It wasn't in the village, love, it's up near Craiglemine Mine, it's been sold, and it's a house now. No, it wasn't in the village.

JMW: But you didn't go to that?

McS: No, we didn't go to that. Well, I suppose it was easier to go to Whithorn than it was to go to that one.

00:27:40

JMW: And you walked?

McS: And we walked. They don't know their living now; because school started at nine o'clock, and went on to four in the afternoon – summer and winter.

JMW: So it would be dark when you came out?

McS: Yes! Aye. The only break we had was when the Admiral was alive: the only break that was had was if the vehicle from the big house was in the town, they were always instructed to bring the estate children home. That sometimes happened about three times a week, so it wasn't all that bad.

JMW: Did you feel that you were very much a part of that estate, did you feel you knew all of the estate people?

McS: Yes, it was a community. It was...

JMW: Do you remember John Wilson's family at the-

McS: Yes, uh-huh, they had their workshop in the village, yes. I remember the brothers. Adam and Jim, and Davie. Davie lived in Manse Cottage, where the Coates people are at the moment – you maybe don't know them?

JMW: No, I don't know them.

McS: Aye, they lived there. Jim lived at Monreith; Adam lived at the little cottage where Campbell Harkness [is], in Glasserton village... And I think there was another brother who went to America... I think so - yes, his headstone is in Glasserton church. But I remember (*at Thire Place?*) and there was a blacksmith as well – and that's been made into a house now too.

JMW: Did you get to go into the blacksmith, ever?

McS: Oh, yes... Fascinating, yes.

JMW: Do you remember who it was?

McS: Jack-Jock – Hawkins, and they lived where Andrew Kerr is. They lived there; and there was another big family, where Andrew Kerr is, that was two houses. Next to him, up the way was a big family called Momichan. They worked on the estate; there was two boys – Tom worked on the estate most of his life, but one of the guys went to the war and didn't come back. There were two sisters there, and they moved to Dumfries; and I remember the elder one was the head cook in Dumfries Hospital, the old hospital. A lot of tooting and froing...

00:31:17

McS: My sister went to the war from Glasserton, she went into the RAF - she was trained at Cranwell, and then she was at Bletchley Park.

JMW: Oh really? Goodness!

McS: She worked an Enigma. She's got her medal, Gordon Brown presented it.

JMW: Gosh, that's exciting!

McS: Yes, she was.

JMW: Presumably she didn't tell anyone about it at the time. How long did it take for her to say anything?

McS: She'd rather not talk about it, even now. But she's very proud of her medal... It took them some time though to get round to it... (*Julia is in awe*) That's Anne, she was quite a hero. Very proud of her.

JMW: So, was Whithorn school a happy memory?

McS: Yes, uh-huh. Of course, we were- I was, and my brother, we were the same age- we were quite unlucky because we were [in] school during the war, and we weren't getting proper teachers, you know. Just getting retired teachers, actually.

JMW: And do you remember any evacuees?

McS: Oh, yes, I remember the evacuees.

JMW: Were they from central Scotland?

McS: Mostly from Glasgow. Quite a few from Clydebank. Quite a few. Do you know Anne Walker, in Dumfries – in Monreith – do you know Anne?

JMW: Yes, [I do].

McS: Well, she was an evacuee, she and her sister, but they were lucky because they came to Whithorn, and stayed with their aunt, Miss Morton, and she was a teacher in Whithorn school.

JMW: So, was your family- because your father was a gardener – did you find that you had better food than other people?

McS: Yes, uh-huh, my sister and I often talk about that, we really didn't know much about it; we had fruit and vegetables, and if you made jam, which my mother did... You got a special allowance of sugar, which we never wanted really. When we talk about it, we never really knew about it.

00:34:15

McS: And on the estate, of course, they had their shoots. I don't remember if these shoots went on during the war, because the keeper went to the war, I don't remember when he came back. But I suppose there would be somebody to keep the vermin down... We were never short, because we always had rabbits and pheasants and that.

JMW: So, the gamekeeper had his own cottage, did he?

McS: Yes, he had his own cottage. Now, who's in it now, the gamekeeper-

JMW:-Findlay Bell-

McS: Yes, but that wasn't the gamekeeper's cottage, the gamekeeper's cottage was further down the road from the big house, on the left hand side. Is it a guy that looks after the hens, or the egg place? The manager. Yes he's in that cottage. Where Findlay Bell is, is the gardener's cottage. Not that that matters very much.

JMW: Do you remember the shoots?

McS: I remember the shoots, yes...

JMW: Did people come from elsewhere to participate?

McS: Yes. Some of the better off. But some very nice people.

JMW: But do you remember them in shooting gear?-

McS: Shooting gear, yes.

JMW: Was anyone required to do the beating?

McS: Oh yes, the estate workers always got [to do] the beating [on those] days. I'd expect there would've been a few guys from Whithorn. But yes, the estate had to turn out.

JMW: And was that considered quite a good day, or did people not particularly enjoy it?

McS: Aww, I think they would enjoy it alright; they would be... My father always did. The food was laid on, and the tips were good.

JMW: Were there any other kind of house parties that you remember?

McS: No, I don't remember that, no. I remember people staying: I remember ladies coming to stay. But my sister thinks that these were the Admiral's relatives. Some people she can name, I don't remember. She can name some of them that were there.

JMW: And what about the gardeners equipment, where was that stored?

00:37:25

McS: Oh aye, there was plenty sheds. Oh, yes. As you go in the door, I would expect, on your left hand side. I don't know, at the moment, it [is] is on the left hand side, a very long shed, and that is where the equipment was kept. These, ahead of you, is what we called the fruit room – it was all laid out, shelves for ever more. The stuff was kept there all winter, the best fruit and veg-

JMW: Things like apples, and pears-

McS: Oh yes, pears. And I say figs. Which had to be each individual fig, as it appeared, was wrapped in linen.

JMW: And did your father have to provide cut flowers for the house as well?

McS: Yes, uh-huh, there had to be plenty of them.

JMW: I've seen a photograph – a very old photograph – of Robin's father's 21st birthday. There seemed to be a big event. Have you heard anything about that?

McS: No, I haven't, no. But it would be a big event.

JMW: I think I've also seen photographs of a tennis match at Glasserton-

McS: Yes, I've seen that one too.

JMW: And do you remember the tennis courts there?

McS: Vaguely. Yes, I've seen that one too, the men and their flannel.

JMW: [So] did you get any presents at Christmas?

McS: Yes, uh-huh. My sister and I, I remember that quite clearly, we got boxes of hankies. with little... remember them, you used to get them with flowers on the corners. Yes, we each got one of these, and we had piles of them! *(laughs)* Maybe I've got some yet. And the boys used to get gloves, and that all stopped.

JMW: Did you go to the house to get that, or were they sent down?-

McS: Oh, no, they were sent down, yes... No, my memories are happy ones, that was good. It's good now to see what Robin has done. The estate's in good hands.

JMW: Do you remember his father as a young man being there?-

McS: Well, I remember when he came back, yes... I remember him getting married, I remember all that, and the children – the boys – being born.

JMW: And was his wedding at Glasserton House, and church?

00:40:56

McS: No, I think they were married in Edinburgh, I think they were. That's where he was at the time. He worked at The Scotsman.-

JMW: Oh did he?

McS: Yes. He was a reporter I think for The Scotsman.

JMW: So when the military requisitioned the house, what happened to the family? Did they just have to leave, or did they go to Fiscal?

McS: Well, of course the Admiral was there then. And a wreck went the house, and well there was nobody there anyway... The staff had to go. That was that. And after that, my father was offered the lease of the gardens, and he took it. And when he was able, he worked away, made an income.

JMW: So he made his income from what, selling-

McS: Selling produce, yes.

JMW: Right, did he take it to Whithorn or send it elsewhere?

McS: No, he sold it locally, yes. So they were quite comfortable. I mean, he used to go out and do other people's gardens; he used to come to (? *Thonder Gee*) and when Miss Roberts had it, she was an old lady, no very fit – and he used to help out there. People who had vines; he was quite an expert on vines. They used to call him out once a year to trim their vines. We did alright. But by that time, the family had grown up, and the boys were working.

JMW: And in your early memories, do you remember horses being used on the estate?

McS: Oh yes, uh-huh. There was one that went into Whithorn who'd bring the coal, and his name was Nelson, because he only had one eye! I remember that, I remember the horses being used.

JMW: Was it quite a big stable?

McS: Yes, have you never been up that way?

JMW: I've been up, it was a while ago.

McS: Oh, there was loads of stabling. Quite a bit, I don't know what it's like now.

JMW: Were there horses for riding, as well as for farm machinery?

McS: Yes, there must have been, well there was. Because I can remember the ladies on their horses. And the bridal path is on the Glasserton road.

00:44:14

McS: A hedge to the front and a hedge to the back, the bridal path runs along there. It won't be there now.

JMW: And do you remember your father ever telling you about a hunt, the Glasserton hunt?

McS: There was the Glasserton hunt, yes.

JMW: Was that before your time?

McS: That's before my time, yes. But he remembered all that, that was all before the war, when life was gracious...

JMW: I've seen the photograph-

McS: Have you?

JMW: Yes, coming down the main street of Whithorn.

McS: Yes, I think I've seen that one somewhere too. So if there was a hunt, there would be a hunt ball.

JMW: And what about the Ladies Steps that lead down-

McS: Yes, onto the shore.

JMW: Did you go down those?

McS: Even in my time they were dangerous. We were warned to keep away from them, yes.

JMW: That presumably was for sea bathing from the house?

McS: Oh yes, that's what it was. And there was a boat house down there as well. I think the remains of it will still be there. But there was a boathouse. I remember playing as children being warned not to go down the steps. They must have been alright at one time.

JMW: And what about the Beggars Row? Do you remember that-

McS: Oh, I remember when every house was occupied! In the Beggars Row, oh aye. And again, they had wonderful gardens.

JMW: And how many houses were there?

McS: I would think there was five, but... Well they would just be but an' bens. There was a family called Spiers that we were – well they would be ages with us- we were very friendly with them. He was a forester, Willie Spiers, I remember that. Aye, the Beggar Row.

00:46:36

McS: My father used to tell us though that the five houses up there, and his recollection would be [that] the road, at one time would follow the shore, would follow the cliffs. And that's possibly, he says; these houses would be on the road side, or close to the roadside, at one time. Well, that was his theory. Because the roads followed the cliffs, right enough, and they came out at Whithorn, up the Kings Road, didn't they. Aye; gosh I remember when the row was full...

JMW: And why was it called that?

McS: Well, again, he seemed to think that's where the beggars' would call. Because there were a lot of travelling people in those days, weren't there? There were a lot of tramps on the road in those days.

JMW: Do you remember any of them?

McS: Aye, well, there was Snibscott, he was famous. That's the only one I remember.

JMW: You saw him?

McS: Oh yes. He was a regular.

JMW: Did your mother give him anything?

McS: Yes, they allowed him to sleep in the shed, overnight only – and leave your tobacco. She always fed him!

JMW: So that was pretty much expected?

McS: It was expected, it was bad luck if you refused, yes.

JMW: And what about the shops in Whithorn? Is that where your mother did the shopping?

McS: Yes, aye, there was plenty shops in Whithorn then. I can't understand why it's goin' downhill; well these modern methods, online and all the rest of it...

JMW: That's right, yes.

McS: But she dealt with a wee shop at the top of the town, Miss B's, you've maybe heard of it?-

McS: I've heard of it.-

00:49:00

McS: Miss B's. That's where she did her shopping. The guy came out twice a week, we would hand the line in at the shop the day before, and he came out twice a week; delivered twice a week.

JMW: Was that a lorry or a van?-

McS: It was a bike! Aye! *(laughs)* A big basket on the front.

JMW: And what about the big house? Did they send in orders to the town?

McS: Oh, well they dealt with the local tradesmen, oh yes. They used the local tradesmen, aye. I remember the postman walking, doing his rounds through Glasserton on his feet.

JMW: So what other shops do you remember in Whithorn?

McS: There was three iron mongers; there was Drapes, and Eddie Martin's, Dougie Gibson. There was a saddler behind Drapes shop. Willie Kendal, was his name. Then there was Brown & Charter's, my sister worked there before she went to the air force. Brown & Charter's... And there was always Kinnear's... Jimmy Denton, the local baker, famous. So where did it all go wrong? Pubs, forever more! *(laughs)* Well, they wouldn't be pubs, I think they were drinking dens...

JMW: So there were a lot of them?

McS: That's where- your house, at The Pend, that was a pub, Kate McQueen.

JMW: Do you remember her?

McS: Yes, I do. Her long black dress.

JMW: They seemed to be respectable, pub owners, at the time?

McS: Oh, at that time, yes. There was one in Whithorn called The Brunswick, now is that where the cafe is now?

JMW: Yes, I've seen pictures.

McS: Interesting old place.

JMW: Yes. Do you recall if there was a lot of drinking, or do you think it would be less than there is now?

McS: I think it would be less, people wouldn't have the money. There would be less, I would say.

00:51:55

JMW: So what happened, you went to school in Whithorn, and what happened after that?

McS: Well, I left school at fifteen. And where... the chemist is now, was the jeweller shop. And that was a guy that was a soldier at Burrow Head, he set up there – and I worked there for a while... I worked in The Grapes for a wee while, and then I got married, and the rest is history! (*Julia laughs*)... Yes, but Glasserton was a lovely place, a lovely place to be a child in Glasserton.

JMW: Do you remember tourists and visitors coming to St Ninian's Cave, do you remember that?

McS: Oh yes, aye. That's gone on for a long, long time, hasn't it?

JMW: Yes, it has. Do you remember the pilgrimages?

McS: Yes, I remember the pilgrimages. Bigger events than they are now... My- I remember my mother saying about them – when they marched through Whithorn people drew their curtains, drew their blinds. It was awful; she didn't like that at all.

JMW: That was because they didn't like them-

McS: That was the religious thing... She thought it was awful. But it happened. I heard Betty Stewart saying that as well – she lived at the top of the town.

JMW: So tell me about- the top of the town and the bottom of the town in Whithorn are very distinct, do you remember that?

McS: Oh yes, aye. They were.

JMW: It seems as if the people at the top of the town didn't play with the people at the bottom of the town, and the people at the bottom didn't play with the top-

McS: No, they didn't, no. They didn't want to know.

JMW: And why do you think that was?

McS: Well of course, there was a school at the top of the town, wasn't there? So maybe it stems from there, that they were segregated at quite a young age.

JMW: And physically, it's quite distinct, because you've got the bottleneck.

McS: Yes, aye! I think that might have a lot to do with it. Again, religion comes in to it, you know.

JMW: You think it was more Catholic at the top of the town?

(00:55:20)

McS: It was, aye, definitely... In my time there, their church was away up at the High Nanes. So really, there was differences made.

JMW: But you, coming from outside the town, you weren't really part of that?

McS: No, not at all.

JMW: So did you have friends from both?

McS: Yes, we were always encouraged to have friends from both, yes. I remember my father saying, they used to come out of the classroom – the Catholics came out of the classroom – and they got their Bible studies different from us. My father used to say that shouldn't be.

JMW: He felt that made a distinction?

McS: Oh yes it did, right away it made a difference. He thought it shouldn't be.

JMW: Do you think Whithorn had more Catholics than other towns and villages?

McS: It certainly had a lot at one time. Aye, I would say it had a lot at one time.

JMW: It seems on the whole to be quite tolerant-

McS:- Now.

JMW: Do you think there was a bigger distinction before?

McS: There was, yes. Our minister, previous to Alec Currie, our minister Campbell Cowie – did you ever know Campbell Cowie?

JMW: I think he was retired by the time I came here, I know the name.-

McS: Yes. Well he did his best, you know. He really encouraged us. He really- he bent over backwards, Campbell did, to bring it together. To a certain extent he did succeed. He didn't like it at all, he wasn't for that. People who were joining the church- like my kids – when they came to join the church, he, part of their instruction, he took them to the Catholic church. Which is a very brave thing to do. Yes he did, and he could explain to them the stations of the cross and all the rest of it. No, he did his best. I think he made quite a good job of it. He was always very friendly with whatever Priest was here; he was always very friendly with them.

JMW: Now, did somebody tell me you worked at The Steam Packet [Inn]?

McS: Yes, I did.

00:58:39

JMW: Now tell me about that, because that's quite an institution round here.

McS: The Steam Packet? Well, I worked when Mrs Brown was there, when she and Nonny (?) had it. I worked for her. I worked just a year for John and Sarah, when they came in; then I went into learning support. It was good at the Packet when Nonny had it. Oh, she was a low one to herself. *(Julia laughs)* She really was. The cooking was good, it was mostly seafood – she taught me a lot, she certainly did.

JMW: Right. Is that the side you were involved with?

McS: Yes.

JMW: So would it look a lot different from what it does now?

McS: Oh yes, aye. It did. She had her own way with things; a bit twee in some things. It was her way. But she treated it like her home. It was lovely, in those days; she had old fisherman's nets up at the window... Oh it was so different, so different.

JMW: Was it more a local pub than it was a tourist pub, if you like, then?

McS: Yes, it was, it was a local pub. It was. We got our share of the tourists. But The Queens was mostly the touristy place. In the years that John had it, it was booming... She didn't care too much for the tourists at all, she just put up with them I think. *(Julia laughs)*

JMW: Did she have quite a lot of fishermen coming in?

McS: Yes, yes. She liked the trawler men, she liked the working people. Aye. We catered quite a lot for the fisherman. And at one point, we catered quite a lot for shooting parties, big shooting parties... Fletchers, people called Fletcher, they came about three times during the shooting season, they came. Freddie Trueman, the cricketer, he came – you'll have heard of Freddie Trueman, the cricketer, well he came with them... Who else do I remember- Lord Bath, he came and stayed for a week... She was a funny old soul; when I used to go down tonight, I'd say, 'What's on tonight then, how many have we got tonight?' Well, she says; 'I've had a phone call this afternoon, and there's a party coming along,' What an old snob she was, she used to say, 'and they just sound like *our* sort of people.' *(both laugh)*

JMW: Now, who's portrait is up in the bar now? There's a portrait of a man with a glass?

McS: Oh, that was the late Jimmy Robertson, he had The Steam Packet before Mrs Brown – he was quite a character. I didn't work in his time.

JMW: So were you living in the Isle then, or did you come in from Whithorn to work at The Steam Packet?

McS: No, I was here. I was here.

01:03:10

JMW: Oh, you were here, okay. Was this your family home from when you were married?

McS: No, we lived on a farm, we lived at (? *Sanwick*) for a while, and then we had a council house, which my husband hated. Then this old house came on the market; oh, it was nothing like this. It took him about four years before in was liveable...-

JMW: Really? And was that a change, moving into the Isle, having been-

McS: From living in the country... Yes, aye it was. Och, you get used to things, don't you.

JMW: What about McWilliam's shop, was that booming when you-

McS: Yes, aye, it was a solid business then, his mother wis running it, and then the post office was there.

JMW: So how many shops were in the Isle?

McS: There was McWilliam's, there was Mrs Donaldson, up there, and that house next door was a shop – Tru's. And then that building round there which was a cafe at one time, but she kept foodstuff.

JMW: And was the Isle always popular with visitors?

McS: Yes, aye.

JMW: Were there boarding houses for them?

McS: The boarding houses were full, year in, year out. Yes, they were. They used to come Glasgow fair, they used to come off the bus in their dozers; year after year. Then, of course, Burrow Head opened, took quite a lot out of the village.

JMW: I didn't ask you quite a lot about the demolition of Glasserton House-

McS: Oh no, no, you didn't.

JMW: How did that happen, or when did that happen?

McS: Well, it was full of dry rot, and wet rot, and everything else. They just decided that it would have had to come down. It would have taken a fortune, and they didn't have a fortune, to put it right. So it came down. That was 1948-9.

JMW: So did anyone go back into it after the army left?

McS: Yes, I'm telling you, this caretaker, Morely Jamieson. Speak to the Laird, he would fill you in about that.

01:06:00

McS: Because he told me he had went on to do quite a bit on television.

JMW: But the family, Mr Johnston Stewart, didn't come back?-

McS: No, they moved to Fiscal. They moved to Fiscal... Well, when he did come back he moved into Fiscal, well when he got married.

JMW: Was the demolition a bit of a shock?

McS: Well it was, it was a bit heartbreaking. It was really sad. Have you seen photographs of the house? It was absolutely beautiful. Yes, it was beautiful.

JMW: It's actually hard to believe anything was there.

McS: He says if he ever comes into (*? forestall*), he'll build a bungalow there for himself. I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon. (*Julia laughs*)

JMW: Was your father a bit disappointed about that, because he built-

McS: He was, they were heartbroken, it's very sad. Reduced to a pile of rubble.

JMW: Was there a sale of anything inside?-

McS: Yes, there was a sale, of what was saleable, at that time. Yes, there was a sale. I remember that. It was in November... No, they didn't like it one little bit.

JMW: No, I can imagine. And was the stone taken away, because there's no piles of-

McS: It was taken away, yes. Local farmers probably took it away. No, there was nothing left. Nothing at all. It was very sad – it just wasn't viable at all, no. [REDACTED].

JMW: So, did you enjoy working in the Isle? Was that a good community?

McS: Och yes, the Isle was quite a good community. You were on the Rural, and you join this and join that, just to keep going, don't you? But, never lostt interest in Glasserton, never.

JMW: I suppose it's very different now, because there's not that big hub of the big house-

McS: No, there's not, no. It was just nice to see it progressing. Aye, Robin's done well. He really has.

01:10:22

JMW: And what about the Isle now? How has that changed, from what you remember?

McS: Quite a bit, yes. There's so many changes. So many people have come to live here – nice folk, I mean there's nice folk. But they've different ideas. We're going to see big changes, with the hall, and sorts of things. And the church is being renovated. So it's all happening.

JMW: So do you go to the Isle church?

McS: Yes, yes. I go to Glasserton too of course, because we're united. I go to Glasserton twice, the first Sunday and the last Sunday. And at the moment, the services are in the hall, but it would be nice to get back into the church.

JMW: At one point, there was some talk about closing Glasserton-

McS: Oh, wasn't there just!

JMW: You weren't happy about that?

McS: Not at all. No, we fought hard. [They] didn't think there was any need for it.

JMW: It's a very pretty church at Glasserton, yes.

McS: I know it takes a lot of money to keep them going; Glasserton has been a bit of a drain. But I didn't think there was any point in closing it. We fought hard for that. Alec was certainly one for closing it... No, again it was thanks to Robin Johnston Stewart that it is open, because he fought very hard. Yes, he did. But it's bums on seats, isn't it? We've got to be realistic, we're not getting them. So how long we can go on, I don't know.

JMW: When you remember it, under the Admiral, was there, what they call, a Laird's loft, in the church?

McS: Oh yes, aye. He's on the right hand side, and the one facing him was the Fiscal gallery. And this one in the middle was the workers! Yes, but he was there every Sunday, leaning over, to see who wasn't there. *(both laugh)*...

JMW: And he brought his own family, presumably?

McS: Oh yes, yes.

JMW: Who was the Fiscal at that time?

McS: The Factor of Glasserton Estate lived in – that's who I remember, I can't go any further back than that – and his name was Mr Hopkins. He was Factor for Glasserton Estate, and he was there.

01:13:57

McS: I mean, there was different Factors – he had to move out of the house because Robin was coming, and that had to be kept for Robin, you know, for Robin's father. So he moved away, Mr Hopkins. And then we had various Factors after that, I remember a Mr Millen, I remember him. Yes, there was others; and there used to be reps from the- the estate was put under trustees, and there used to be various reps came down to see what was going on... You've been in Woodfall, you've been in the gardens?

JMW: I have, yes-

McS: Did you see the little place that's walled off in the front garden, in the first garden, when you come to it. There's a fireplace there. Well, the ladies that were staying at the big house, they used to come down there – I think they were the Admiral's sisters. Well, anyway, they used to come down there, and the fire was put on for them, and they sat there in the summer. Big hats and parasols.

JMW: Ah, right, and that was an outdoor area?

McS: It was an outdoor area, yes.

JMW: Just to keep them warm?

McS: Mmhmm. Right the sun wouldn't always be shining I suppose.

JMW: And did you find that the family, in the Admiral's time; was it a popular family, did people locally like them?

McS: Oh yes, they were respected, yes... Well to go back to Glasserton church. When there was the kerfuffle about closing the church, there was also talk of them selling the church, and that- we weren't having that either. However, what can we do? And Robin was involved by that point. And I said to him, 'that mausoleum there, that's yours.' He says, 'I don't think so.' I said, 'Tis. It belongs to the estate.' Because when we were young, my father used to put us up into it, to clean it – because it had a flat bottom and top. And we had to go in there and clear the weeds, and all the rest of it. So I'm telling him this, and he says, 'Well, I don't know.' He says, 'there's nothing in the records that I know of.' But so many of the

records were destroyed, anyway. I says, 'Right then, we'll maybe have to sort this out.' 'Oh,' he says, 'carry on.' So I spoke to John Schoolar about it, an' he says, 'We'll have to do something about that then.' So within a fortnight, it was all sorted out. And that mausoleum, crypt, whatever you want to call it, it does belong to Robin. They went back; Jack Hunter, Tom McReff and John Schoolar, and among them, they sorted it out – and it does belong. And it was built in 1530, for this ancestor of Robin's. So the church itself was built in 17-something or other, and it must have been built onto the mausoleum. I think there would be great difficulty now in selling the church, they wouldn't have that, so we got that sorted out. Have you seen the plans for that? Have you seen anything connected with that?

01:19:28

JMW: No, I don't think so.

McS: I wonder if I have it handy... *(Mrs McShean gets up to look in the room)* Yes, this is my copy. Would you like to take it with you and read it?

JMW: Well, fascinating, yes. By all means.

McS: There's a bit missing, but Nancy has it – Willie's wife – she has it. But that's the story of it. *(She gives plans to Julia)*

JMW: Is this Tom McCreth's writing? I recognise it. *(laughs)* Lovely, great.

McS: But there is an illustration of the actual Heraldic thing that's on- if you know what I mean-

JMW: Yes, I do-

McS: Well, Nancy has it, I better hand it in to you.

JMW: Great, thank you very much.

McS: If you want to take a copy of it, by all means. *(Mrs McShean sits back down)*

JMW: Why thank you. So, um, Robin's son Christopher has come back, is that something you're pleased about?-

McS: Yes, quite pleased about that, yes...

JMW: Is he one of the younger boys?-

McS: He's the youngest, yes... Is he going into Craigmoline?

JMW: I think so, I think that's right.

McS: I heard that; well that's good. He's at college, at the moment, isn't he?

JMW: I think he's finished-

McS: Ah, he's finished, right-

JMW: I can remember Robin's mother telling me when Christopher was quite little, she thought he would be the one to come back-

McS: Oh right, fancy that!

01:21:42

JMW: I think he liked to go out on the tractors with the men, and she thought he had an interest in it; and then he's be the one to take over. She was right!

McS: Oh gosh, she was right! *(laughs)* Because I think the other two are into more business things... Well, that's good.-

JMW: He is the future-

McS: Because he's recently got married, hasn't he?

JMW: Yes... So how optimistic do you feel about the future?

McS: Oh, Julia, it's hard to know... What is there? We could do with some light industry for the young people couldn't we? I don't see it, I really don't. Unless something's done.

JMW: And yet some of your sons have been good employers-

McS: Oh yes, they're alright, but you know, they've done it through their own efforts. They've worked hard, George and Billy, they have. And I've another one up North, who's an electrician. He's doing fine as well. They say it's slowing up mind-

JMW: Well the housing [market] will-

McS: I mean building's not happening, is it. No, they're alright.

JMW: And one of your grandson's works for-

McS: Aye, Abrew's. He's in with his father, he's doing fine. Student of the year.

JMW: Is that right?

McS: Yes, he's a wonderful joiner, great joiner. *(telephone rings)* Excuse me. I bet it's a cold call! *(Mrs McShean leaves the room)*

- *Hello? Hello? – Yes, well I'm not interested. (Mrs McShean returns, laughing)*

Oh, what are they like!?

JMW: You were right!

McS: They'll be another one about six o'clock, when you're watching the news!

JMW: Oh dear!... And so what about the Isle as a community, how has that changed?

01:24:14

McS: Well, it's quite a strong community still. But again, it's thanks to the people who have come in, It is thanks to them, Of course, we tend to say, let them get on with it. I don't say that, because I'm not doing anything now, I'm eighty. But it seems to be, you hear it, 'Och, let them get on with it.' Which is sad, because they should be joining in...

JMW: True. So do you think there's a divide between local people and people who come in?

McS: Definitely, it's sad, there's no need for it...

JMW: Do you think the people who were born here resent the fact that other people come in and do stuff, and seem to be more active?

McS: Yes, I think there is quite a bit of that. Bit of jealousy, envy.

JMW: And at the isle, all those new houses being built, how did that affect the rest of the village do you think?

McS: Well, that's something I can't understand, all this fuss now. Because these houses went up on the hill, these chalets went up down the road. The village never blinked! It's only recently, that there's all this kerfuffle. The village didn't bother! There was no... letters of complaint, spoiling the view and everything else, that there is now. And an awful lot of these people who are complaining are people who have come to live here. Which is a bit shallow! I think it is, anyway. But they're not all pretty houses up on the hill; some of them eyesores, really. But they never bothered. Nobody ever objected before. So I don't know. Doesn't bother me.

JMW: So do you think the new development down at the hall will bring some life to the Isle?

McS: I don't know, can only hope... I mean, if the tourists aren't coming in their thousands just to see – 'Oh, the Isle's got a new hall, oh we have to go.'... Are they? No. Actually, at the moment, I think we've got a pretty nice little hall. Oh well, we'll see. But it was a very good grant we got, marvellous... What do you think yourself?

JMW: Um, I'm always for development, because I think if it stands still, it may not thrive – I think it has to move. I think like you, perhaps it's going to have to struggle to develop an identity that people want to see, and things that will bring them here-

McS: I think so too. I think it's going to be difficult to sustain in the long term... But even at the moment, if it gives a bit of employment, well fine... And then again, they're going to have a coffee shop, and grand ideas I know – but how badly is it going to effect The Steam Packet, who are struggling anyway... A lot of ways to look at it, but I would be doubtful that they'd be able to sustain it.

JMW: What about Machars Movies, do you think that offers a way forward?

01:29:56

McS: Oh, it's good, yeah.

JMW: Do you go there?

McS: I've been once or twice to it; I'm not a member or anything. If there's anything that suits me. Do you go?

JMW: I don't actually, I have to say.

McS: No, I don't rush to go. Once you go down to the hall, it's repeats, and repeats and repeats; and eventually, you've seen them all. But it's good-

JMW:- Well, I suppose it's different to watch it as a community, rather than sitting in your own home-

McS: And they do meals, don't they?

JMW: Yes.

McS: But they've been certainly bringing some right old films.

JMW: So do you think visitor activity has gone down in the Isle?

McS: Oh, it definitely has, Julia. It definitely has over the past five years, it's shrunk. That's a holiday house next door to me; and the people they had staying this year was the owner's

mother and a friend, no bookings what so ever. On the other hand, Paul, do you know Paul?-

JMW: Yes-

McS: He's been busy. At Easter, he told me he's had twenty six bookings then, and he's had more since. So, it's hard to know.

JMW: And how do you think the character of the Isle has changed?

McS: Well it has hasn't it?... Well, nothing stands still, you've just got to go along with it. I hear people say, you can go another night, you can go down the street and sit on the wall and they'd be a crowd of people... Times of changed, that's old hat. That's not the way it is now.

JMW: And I suppose the fishing trade having gone down, it's a big change, from when you were working in The Steam Packet-

McS: Oh, aye, definitely. You know, when it was at its height, we've seen twenty seven trawlers tied up in the harbour.

JMW: Goodness!

01:32:50

McS: That was when they discovered the scallop beds out there. Nothing like that now. Well, I suppose, they've cleaned them out – they'll have to wait another twenty years before anything...

JMW: Is there anything I haven't asked you that you feel I should have asked you?

McS: No, I think you've done very well! *(both laugh)*... Anything else you want to?

JMW: Well, it's what I don't know that I can't ask about probably, but o, that's been really interesting about Glasserton Estate. I've had other people comment about it, like John Wilson, Greta, and I do intend to interview Robin. He said yes, but he's hard to pin down.

McS: Aye, so he is. *(Both laugh)*

JMW: So, no, that's been great, so I can turn off if you think you've said everything you need to-

McS: Oh, I think so... If I can remember anything, I can have another go-

JMW: We can always revisit it. Well thank you very much.

