

Interviewee: Ken Brown (KB)	Interviewer: Mark Mulhern (MM); Caroline Milligan also present (CM)
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MM: We'll be talking about various things to do with the Dumfries and Galloway Study. So to start off, Ken, could I ask you your date of birth?

KB: Yea, 27/08/42.

MM: Grand, and where were you born?

KB: In Dumfries, not far from here actually [*laughs*].

MM: Really?

KB: The building's no there now, actually. I was born in Dumfries but I lived in a wee village outside Dumfries.

MM: Where was that?

KB: Collin, it's a wee village, it's three miles outside Dumfries.

MM: We were there two weeks ago, three weeks ago, giving a talk, aye.

KB: Were you?

MM: Aye. You missed it [*laughter*].

KB: I don't live there now.

MM: Where else have you lived in your life, Ken?

KB: Ah well, I was brought up in the village and then moved into Dumfries, when I got married.

MM: Right, uhuh.

KB: When ah was twenty-six, ah think. Ah stayed there a good number o years and then moved to Lochmaben.

MM: Right.

KB: Do you know where Lochmaben is?

**01m 12s.**

MM: Yes, uhuh, not far from here.

KB: About thirty years ago.

MM: Right.

KB: It's Lochmaben ah live now, still live there.

MM: Right.

KB: So, really, just through, when ah got married ah came to Dumfries, quite liked it here but apparently ah was born in Dumfries, as I said, at a place called Charnwood, which isnae that far from here

MM: Charnwood?

KB: But it's no there now. Just a big old house and then they built the new Cresswell Hospital, Maternity Hospital, just a few years after that ah think.

MM: Right.

KB: And it's no there now either.

MM: Is it not?

KB: It's all about the hospital now, it's all in one, and they're going to do away with that as well [*laughs*].

MM: Are they, indeed?

KB: Aye, they're gonna build a new hospital away out near where the ICI used to be. And it's, when you look at the hospital, the maternity wing is so new, and it makes you wonder why they're gonna do away with it, it's, they reckon it's needed.

MM: Oh well, there we are.

KB: Who are we to argue?

MM: No, indeed. And your parents, were they from hereabouts?

KB: Yea, aye, ma father was from Lochmaben, ma mother was from Collin, actually.

MM: Right, uhuh.

**02m 15s.**

KB: And they lived a wee spell in Dumfries too.

MM: Right.

KB: That was during the War ah think, actually. I know nothing about that part.

MM: Right.

KB: Then they both stayed at Collin and I was brought up there. So they're local people too actually.

MM: What did your father do for a living?

KB: He was an insurance agent, mainly, trained as a, he started off as a joiner and he served his time there and then he eventually he moved to insurance, the Prudential, as I did [*laughs*], eventually.

MM: Right.

KB: And he retired and then I started with the Prudential about two years after that. Was there about twenty-six years.

MM: Were you?

KB: Aye.

MM: And what had you done prior to that or did you go straight there from school.

KB: Actually I started working in Dumfries in a shop. Just where you were actually, that was the shop.

MM: Oh right, the Baker's Oven place, aye?

KB: No, it was the...

MM: It wouldn't be called that then, of course, no *[laughter]*.

**Maypole Dairy Company 03m 17s.**

KB: It was the Maypole Dairy Company.

MM: Right.

**03m 10s.**

KB: You know the Home and Colonial, Lipton's, Maypole, they were the chain stores of their day, I suppose.

MM: Yes.

KB: And, so it was the Maypole Dairy Company, I worked in. And that place you were at, there was two shops there actually. One was our shop and one was a wool shop next to it.

MM: Right.

KB: So, I was there for about six years.

MM: And were you doing deliveries and whatnot or-?

KB: I used to go out on the message bike, you know, on the cobbled streets. It was great fun *[laughs]*. But I mainly served in the shop.

MM: And was it a general grocer's then?

KB: Oh aye, aye. Maypole, ah think started as a kinna dairy shop, way before my day, that is.

MM: Uhuh.

KB: And they ventured into groceries and such, it was a grocer's shop. And you had to, when you were first in, you were last in I should say, you did the message bike, sort of thing, and then when somebody else started you moved, you gave that part up and went into the shop. The shop's then of course were so much different from what I see nowadays.

MM: Absolutely, aye.

KB: They were, I reckon they were grocers in my day *[laughs]* not nowadays...

MM: Yea, how many of a staff were there when you were there?

KB: There was about, probably about seven or eight and, you know, when you think back on it, the space we had to work in, not very big shops then.

MM: No.

KB: And it was quite an art, ah think, to work with people behind a counter.

MM: Aye, because it would all be counter service, was it.

**04m 28s.**

MM: It was counter service, aye, and people would come in with their wee list and they would shout out what they wanted.

MM: Uhuh.

KB: And you'd put in in their bag for them and all that sort of thing, it was quite, so different from what it is nowadays.

MM: Yea.

MM: And women, ah should say people, mainly women, they did their shopping in a different manner then too. They would come into the shop and like 'How much is your sugar today, son?' [*Laughs*].

MM: Yea.

KB: 'It's one and a penny.' 'Oh ah can get it at the Home and Colonial for a shilling.' So they just went straight down to the Home and Colonial and bought it. They did their shopping, what they could afford to buy then ah suppose.

MM: Yes.

KB: And then it's a whole different ball game then. And of course it was all different from, then as well we had to, the stuff that came into the shop and in bulk, a lot of it. Like, lentils and all that sort of stuff, it came in in bags of twenty-eight pounds or something and you had to make them up into pound bags and all that to do. And lard as well, it was a mucky job lard. You don't see lard nowadays, do you?

MM: No.

KB: No, ah don't think you do. You had to make the lard into pound things, it was messy. Bacon, the bacon coming in, the sides of bacon.

MM: And was that local, did it come from nearby the bacon or from a central depot.

KB: The bacon? Ah'm no too sure where that came from. It actually came by rail, they used to come to Dumfries Station and there were a rail wagon, an old fashioned looking thing used to come and unload. And lorries as well, delivered the sugar and all that sort of stuff. But the bacon, of course, it had to be boned and all the rest of it, because it was big sides o bacon. And we had all that work to do, we'd cellars mind you, down the stairs, that's where it was all done, where the meat was cut, down there. The job itself wisnae too bad, serving the public was like, it was sometimes ok, sometimes it wasn't.

**06m 10s.**

MM: Just the public.

KB: But unfortunately there was no money in it, hence the reason that I left, you had to get out and get something if you wanted to make some money.

MM: Aye.

**ICI 06m 19s.**

KB: So, I actually went to the ICI, ma next job. The ICI in its day, that, the ICI was quite big in Dumfries in that day. Must have been about fifteen hundred employees, in plastics division.

MM: So that was plastics, not pharmaceutical, then?

KB: No, the ICI started off, well I started, they started off during the war with explosives. When I started there it was still in operation a wee bit, the Nobel Division they called it and everything. I think it's, some of it operated, but I was in the plastic side that was the up and coming thing then.

MM: Right.

KB: Propafilm wrapping, it's for the wrapping, you know, Golden Wonder bought it for the tattie crisp packets.

MM: Ah, right.

KB: That kinna film. And also Melinex which is used in x-rays and things like that.

MM: Oh I see, for the film for the x-rays?

KB: Aye they made it in there was well, aye. I was in the propafilm section and I was there for ten years but it was shift work. The money was quite good, I have to say, but shift work was just, shift work, ah wisnae too happy with it. And ah got the chance to work with the Prudential, so I went there. But looking back on the ICI days as well, you know, we used to get fed up and all the rest of it, but looking back, you think back on the folk you worked with then it puts a kinna different perspective on things, how you think back on things.

MM: In what way would you say, was it a type of community or-?

**07m 41s.**

KB: Aye, the lads, you know, thinking back and when you see them again it's, you have a good blether about it and then you seem to think of the good old days. You know it's a funny, you dinnae think o it that way then [*laughs*].

MM: No no.

KB: No, it wisnae, it's a peculiar thing on life, I reckon, when you think back and think of maybe the good things.

MM: Do you think that is selective memory or-?

KB: It may well be aye, aye.

MM: It's hard to know, isn't it?

KB: It's hard to tell actually.

MM: Aye, certainly.

KB: Because ah look back and I have no affection about it, mind you, but something like that and [?] jobs.

MM: So that must have been one of the larger employers hereabouts then?

KB: Oh aye.

MM: What do you think?

KB: It was a good employer, the ICI. Many, many, many people went through it, you know, went and worked for a while and then, many people left as well, of course, the shift work used to get me down.

MM: Yes.

KB: Although there was a lot of big employers, the rubber works, what we called the rubber works, it was Gates, it's a very small affair now, mind you. But it wisnae a very secure job, the ICI was a good firm to work for.

MM: Yes.

KB: When you think back on the ICI it was probably one of the biggest companies in the UK at that time. It doesn't exist now, it's not there, it's just gone.

**08m 53s.**

MM: It's strange isn't it?

KB: I find that very, very strange, that a big company like that could be, go downhill I suppose, like that. It's most peculiar.

MM: Because there's still need for the products that they make.

KB: Aye. Well, there's still Dulux paint, that was ICI, but ah don't think they own it now. And all this, the film that they used to make, other countries make it.

MM: Aye.

KB: Maybe they make it cheaper, of course.

MM: Possibly, possibly.

KB: Who know, ah don't know.

**Prudential Insurance 09m 20s.**

MM: So you were led to work at the Prudential, then.

KB: Aye.

MM: And what was it you did with them?

KB: I was an agent, you know, went round the houses collecting the money, selling insurance.

MM: Right.

KB: That was your job, you had to sell insurance and to collect the premiums round the houses.

MM: How did you find the various roles that you had there, then? Selling and the collecting?

KB: Ah found it, when we were agents, the role changed, by the way, later, it did change quite a bit. When we were agents your role was, you collected money, you had the administration to do and you had to sell insurance. Well, Prudential are saying 'You'll sell insurance.' Selling was the more important thing in any selling organisation, wasn't it? So we had to sell the insurance and then, so you'll allocate so much time in a week to that.

MM: Yes.

**10m 08s.**

KB: And then the Prudential, you could see that they were changing as well because employing all these people, there was about nearly ten thousand agents in the UK.

MM: Gee whiz, really that many?

KB: A big, big staff. And the products, like every other company, they werenae very, well the money's coming back but the expense ratios that they had problems with. We were becoming too expensive to employ and things changed eventually of course. And they changed us into financial consultants.

MM: Right.

KB: Fancy word, isn't it [*laughter*]? And then which meant, of course, no more collections, they did away with, they had people just collecting money and that was it. And we had to sell then, five days a week and it began to change quite considerably then, more pressure. There was a lot of pressure put on you. And then the financial things started to change as well, we had to work in a different way because they're always mis-selling going on, and what have ye, ah cannae mind the name o the thing they they called it again. But the set way that we had to work.

MM: Right.

KB: They produced this form, forms, and it was really a fact finding form, that's really what it was, to sell to the customer, find out what you and your financial circumstances and all that sort of stuff and we called it a personal financial review form and it went on for pages and got bigger and bigger as time went past and it got to a ludicrous stage, actually, and then if there were one wee mistake in these forms they just sent it all back to ye, back to the client, sorry, ah forgot to tick that box, would ye initial it. It got to that kinna stage where they were making it, as if they were making it difficult for us to work.

MM: Yes.

KB: And ah'm convinced now they did because when I left in 1999, I took early retirement actually because I found I just couldnae cope wi the job anymore.

MM: Right.

12m 01s.

KB: And many others in my kinna age group as well, and computers were comin in as well, of course. Ah eventually took early retirement and about a year and a half later all the field staff were made redundant, the whole lot, everybody. They did away with the whole complete field staff and then sell through independent financial advisers, that's the way they're doing their business nowadays.

MM: Yes.

KB: I was annoyed, mind you, because a year and a half, if ah'd have stuck it oot ah'd hae got...

MM: You would have got a nice...

KB: ...redundancy, aye. Although my wife worked with them as well mind you. She was in the office, she got redundancy [*laughter*].

MM: It wasn't all bad then.

KB: It wasn't all too bad. Of course that was only a reflection, you can't help these things, you make the decision and you go for it and that was it.

MM: Yea, and in your earlier days as an agent then, how wide an area would you travel round?

KB: Ach, it was, I would say it would be about twenty square miles, it depended really in a sense, if it's, I suppose you could say cities were totally different from our area.

MM: Yes.

KB: Cities were like that, high-rise flats, we were more spread out. They gave you part of the town and a part of the country as well.

MM: Ah good, ok.

KB: Ah think they tried to balance it out that way and ah think they were about thirteen square miles or something.

MM: Right.

KB: When ah first started, it was first started on the other side o the town which was a place called Lochside. Now it wisnae the best of places.

13m 33s.

MM: Ok.

KB: Not criticising, mind you, I'd never been in the place but I'd heard a lot about it 'Lochside? Don't go there' sort of thing. However ah started work and ah did fine the people in Lochside, fine, wee pockets of bad people, they were fine to work with, but there wisnae much money in that area. The country area was ok, you know, the farmers, they were different in the country. But then this Lochmaben area, the old guy up there, he died in actual fact, so ah put in a transfer to move to that areas because I recognised it as a better area to work in. So ah



went up there, but they asked me to move up there as well, ah lived in Dumfries, it's only eight miles up the road, they want ye inside yer area, yer work area.

MM: What? Actually live there?

KB: Aye, and they wouldnae give me the job unless ah did that.

MM: That's very interesting. Is that because they want the agents to be part of the community itself.

KB: That's it, aye.

MM: And did you have any sense that you were the, the role of an agent had some sort of status to it?

KB: Ah think that's the way they thought, aye.

MM: Aye. Do you think that was accurate?

KB: I didn't quite agree with that. But ye got to know people and ah really didn't like selling insurance to ma friends.

MM: No, indeed.

KB: Ah did not like doing that because you had to be very, ye ask a lot of, eventually, we had to ask a lot of questions that I thought were quite personal, in a sense. Because there was questions ah had to ask people ah would not like people to ask me that because we had to go into in depth with all their finances, what they've got in the bank, savings etc, etc., income, outgoings, the lot. I thought it was quite personal, actually, but that's the way it's worked nowadays.

MM: Aye.

**15m 10s.**

KB: That's the way it's worked nowadays, that's the way it is, ye couldn't work any other way. Some people didn't like it, one guy 'What are ye asking me all these questions for?' I was writing it down on the form 'Let me see it' he just tore it up 'Don't you ask me these questions.' 'Let me out of here' [*laughter*]. It's how people see it, anyway that's what you had to do your job and you just did it.

MM: And how many people would you be seeing on a regular basis?

KB: As an agent?

MM: Uhuh.

KB: Aye, you'd be seeing quite a lot. You're in the house and back out, got the money, a wee blether, back out. In a week, probably, I would reckon, on an average, about a hundred a week, houses I'd be in.

MM: That's quite number.

KB: Aye, you'd want to get through. Mondays and Fridays were the busy days and Tuesdays and Thursdays as well were quite busy. Ah reckon ye're in about a hundred houses in a week.

MM: Aye. So, over the years, did you get to know some of your customers quite well then?

KB: Aye, ye get to know them but you've got to make sure you don't sort of get to know them too well, don't ye?

MM: Yea, yea.

KB: What ah mean is don't get to friendly with them, like become buddies, you know what ah mean. Ah think you've got to sort of stand off a wee bit, if ye want to do business with them.

MM: Yes.

KB: And ah found that was the best way, ye get to know them well, mind you. But not go to out drinking with let's say.

MM: Indeed.

KB: Not to that stage.

MM: And did you find that a satisfying job?

**16m 33s.**

KB: Some of the job was satisfying, aye, och aye, aye ah think so. Ah think as long as you, when you were, when you're in that job, it was common knowledge then that you werenae selling Prudential, you were selling yourself.

MM: Right.

KB: Yourself that's important, ye had tae sell yourself because there was other, there was the Co-op, The Pearl Assurance, and some of them were in the same house as you. So if the person felt they wanted to do a wee bit business, ye wanted to do it wi you because sometimes they werenae bothered wi the company, they wouldnae hae known the company in any case, one company's nae better than the other. So it was the person that had the biggest impact in the house that would get the business. So that was the common thing that was thought of at that time. Sell yourself first and then the product after, the Prudential.

MM: And did you, reflecting back on it, did you learn anything about where you lived, by doing the job, that you'd otherwise think you might not know, about the people and the place?

KB: I suppose you do, aye. Ah think you do. Ah learned a lot about people, doing that job, ah think, yea, ye do learn a bit and the area, as well, too, of course. Ah think that's the way you would put it, it's learning about people, other people's problems, because they gave you their problems. It's amazing what they told ye.

MM: Really?

KB: Oh, gosh, aye. Really quite amazing.

MM: Really?

KB: Aye. And one funny thing was, that was a process job in the ICI, and then ah immediately went to this job with a collar and tie on and ah did notice they looked on ye differently.

MM: Really?

KB: They really did.

MM: Yes.

KB: As if ah knew everything [*laughter*]. And ah didn't know any more than them. Then it became with a lot of the people 'Mr Brown'.

**18m 36s.**

MM: Right.

KB: The first name was never used by some people 'No, no, no, you're Mr Brown'. Ah used to say to them, because I preferred ma first name to be used, but it was 'Mr Brown'.

MM: It's quite responsibility to carry that status, isn't it?

KB: Obviously they, I think the insurance industry built this kinna reputation thing up with the previous agents when it all started and these were older people. Nowadays, mind you, because the funny thing is, the older people that call you that, but the wee boy in the street would call you 'Kenny' [*laughter*]. Because that was a different generation from the old folk. So ah think they tended to give ye quite a bit of respect because of the job. Not because of me, it was the job, I found when I initially started, I thought to myself.

MM: Well, over time it would be a combination of the two perhaps.

KB: Yes, aye, and ye have tae think that way, that ye build yer reputation up if ye can. If ye want to sell anything you've got to look at it that way.

MM: Aye, aye.

KB: And eventually ye begin tae understand the job better etc., etc., and ah think the one thing that, ah'm no the best talker in the world, mind you ah says, but one thing we did find that when ye knew yer job, you could talk to the people because you knew what you were talking about, you know, and you felt one step ahead of the customer so as ye, and ye felt more confident that way, when you're in the house.

MM: Yes.

KB: Ah like talking one to one wi people, ah don't like talking to crowds, let's say. Ah cannae be bothered wi that. Not good in crowds funny enough, a lot of people in this room, just now, ah wouldn't say very much. Funny that.

MM: It's a different flow isn't it?

KB: One to one's totally different.

MM: Aye.

KB: Odd.

**20m 20s.**

MM: And you were saying you took early retirement.

KB: Aye.

MM: In 1999?

KB: 1999, mm.

MM: So, what do you do with yourself since then?

KB: Well, actually, ah did go back tae work. Ah had a spell off mind you, and a found, a play golf a lot and playing a lot of golf at that time but ah was gettin, ah was wandering round the golf course just a matter of walking round the golf course, and ah wouldnae, there's something, missing something.

MM: Yes.

KB: And ah went back to work with Scottish Gas, for about six months, and got out quick, that was a rat race [*laughs*].

MM: Was it?

KB: Selling gas and electricity, you know, dear, oh dear, what a job it was. But ah came from the Prudential to that type of work, no, no, this is not. What they were doing was awful so, terrible.

MM: Was that based in Dumfries?

KB: Aye, they gave you areas to go to. You got sheets from the company and you had to go to these people and ah did not like it.

MM: Door to door, was it?

KB: Aye.

MM: And god how ah lasted six month, ah'm no very sure, I was totally fed up with it. And then ah actually stopped it and ah got another job, in Lochmaben, with a financial, there was like a planning consultant.

MM: Right.

**21m 25s.**

KB: Wife was friendly with my wife and ah knew the guy, right enough. So one day my wife says to me 'Kathleen says that if you're interested in a job, with Ian', he's the man that has the business. 'And all you'll do is you'll go round with a big' you know how they do the measuring, go round with the big pole thing and do all the measurements round about. 'Oh' ah says 'I could do that, that's just what ah'm looking for, something easy.' That's what she thought it would be. However, when I got into the job, it was on the computers. I ended up drawing plans, survey plans and things like that.

MM: How interesting.

KB: 'And you have to do this? I don't understand computers.' However there was one young lady worked with him and she was very good to me, loads of patience, but obviously she needed loads of patience because to learn even the computer and all the way it worked, it's all set up for drawing plans, mind you.

MM: Sure, yes.

KB: And so therefore ah got, ah did no too bad in that job funny enough. Ah learned jist what ah needed to learn to draw the survey plans and he gave me plans to modify and this sort of thing. Ah didnae plan anything, we'd go to houses, or maybe old barns and things, and measure them up and then they had to be drawn, the survey, the floor levels and all the walls and stuff.

MM: Yes.

KB: Which ah quite enjoyed doing. Ah did enjoy doing that job actually, certainly didn't mind doing.

MM: Sounds very different to your previous employment.

KB: It was actually, ah didnae think ah was capable o doing it but it's amazing what ye can do when ye really set your mind to it.

MM: Yes, aye.

KB: But it was a good job, it was only three days a week, and ah was quite happy wi that. So back on the golf course, ah'm still golfing yet. So ah did that for about three years and ah retired when ah was sixty-five.

MM: Grand.

**23m 13s.**

KB: Ah said 'That's enough.' I'd had enough by then so-.

MM: And do you enjoy retirement now?

KB: Aye, ah'm enjoying it now, aye, more settled now.

MM: Aye.

KB: Ideally ah would have liked to stay with the Prudential till ah was sixty, I would have, because ah was fifty-seven or fifty-eight, and ah would have liked that better, ah think, but it just wasn't to be. If your job's not right and you're not happy and it's really getting you down, out.

MM: Aye, it's not worth it is it?

KB: I'd been long enough to get a reasonable pension.

MM: Good.

KB: Not the best, but ah was lacking in years, actually. But, so, fine now.

MM: Good.

KB: Ma wife worked wi the Prudential too. She's retired now.

MM: Good.

KB: Gets in ma way [*laughter*]. For a spell ah was retired and she was still working, she's five years younger than me.

MM: Right.

KB: It's quite handy that, actually [*laughter*]. Ah was on ma own, but now she's there aw the time now [*laughter*].

MM: Ah'll not make any comment about that.

KB: Ma wife plays golf too so we both play and it's grand. We're very close to the golf club too, at Lochmaben, just down the back, about three hundred yards away, so everything's just fine and dandy that way.

MM: Ah'll ask you just, towards our conclusion here, just a few sort of general questions.

**24m 30s.**

KB: Aye.

**Dumfries 24m 20s.**

MM: Because you've lived in Dumfries and Lochmaben most of your days.

KB: Aye, that's right.

MM: What changes have you seen, over your lifetime, that have struck you as being the biggest change?

KB: I think it's the kinna shopping centre areas, the way shopping, going back to, mind you when you just walk into Dumfries now you can see it's like any other town, I suppose, in this day and age. That to me is a big, big, huge difference to the way it is. To walk about the High Street nowadays, it's not the same sort of atmosphere as there use to be, but at the same time when ah, if ah want to go for a tin of paint of whatever ah go to Homebase, park the car, walk in, walk back and go home. You couldn't do that when the shops were in there, so a big difference there right enough. Ah think socially too the pubs are different from they used to be, they are different to they used to be and ah think that, to me, ah see a change there that ah'm never too sure about the new hours that they brought in, from when ah was a young boy, a young man, drinking, it was ten o'clock and you're out. Ah found that was no such a bad thing from what you see nowadays. This drinking in nightclubs through to early hours o the morning, it's no wonder we have problems on the streets because you can consume a lot of drink in that time and there's people not too good with drink. So these sort of things spring to my mind. Ah don't think it's a good thing or a bad thing, in a sense. Social, well ah think as ye get older ye're social life does change in any case, you do different things, ah think, ye do different things, but the thing about Dumfries, the changes, it's an interesting question you asked to answer that one. It's jist what ye see, right enough, and our lives do change and I find it quite a hard question to answer, in actual fact. Because, as ah say, ah can see the changes when ah worked in Dumfries, to what it is now, and how people go about their shopping etc., etc., and the ICI going now, that's away now, all these things have changed for us, which is happening all over, I suppose, and ach, of course, ah think as well, yer family grows up, I've got two of a family and grandchildren and that sort of takes over your life too, a bit. It does. But Dumfries, these towns'll never go back to the way they were. Ah think they were massive, quite a big problem in the town centre to me, it looked like a town centre. They try different things mind you but you'll never get the shops back in there again. That's a different thing, never do that.

**27m 33s.**

But ah don't see that as a problem in a sense, as long as they do something with the High Street just to make it more compact with what shops they have and accept that we have the Homebases which ah must admit, they are good stores these for shopping, and ah do think they're great places, you can get what you want, it's easy to get at and away again. Socially, people, most people have changed as well, mind you, all the time. Ah think in my young day we were easier to please than we are nowadays. We had less, of course, less than they have nowadays when you think on the youngsters, all the things that they have at their fingertips, computers etc. I have a three year old grandchild who plays games on the computer, it's amazing how he does it.

MM: Three years old.

KB: Cannae read but he can understand where to press to get the things and it's amazing to watch him, just the wee brain, there you go. When ah was that age, you know thinking back to when we were young, we never had these facilities, nothing, our whole way of playing and growing up was totally different and what ah really think sometimes annoys me is they say there's nothing for the youngsters to do nowadays. Ah've heard it said quite a lot of times, 'Wait a minute [?] you know, 'There's loads to do, if ye want to find it', and ah think we had tae go and find things to do, ah think the youngsters nowadays get things done for them and expect it to be, well most, a lot them do, not them all obviously. So ah find that quite a difference as well.

MM: Aye.

KB: How the things have progressed. But ah will say, mind you, that my age group, ah think we've gone through a great time, we have. Nowadays, my son, my family, my son, they've mortgages, they've both got to go out and work. We didnae have tae, have tae go out and work really, both, we seemed to manage, but ah think at that stage when we got married in 1968, 1970 we bought our first house, £3000, you know. But it was a lot of money at the time. But we were able to do it then, comfortably, and there was only me was working for a while when we had the family, that is, we werenae well off by the way, but we manged no bother and ah think after that and ah have spoken to a lot of people in my age group who think the same thing, we had good times.

**30m 01s.**

Ah was born jist during the War, mind you, but ah think somehow that after the War things progressed at a good rate and all the rest of it and it's been a lot different now being brought up but there again people just accept the way things are. Not any more unhappy or happier than we were, ah don't think. Ah think so, oor social life was different too, then. Ah think we were easier to please, we found our own way, but you have to go with the flow haven't you, nowadays.

MM: Indeed. The last main question, I'd like to ask you is a, again it's maybe a difficult question, or a silly question, ah don't know. Do you have any sense that there's a Dumfriesshire identity? Do you feel if somebody says 'Where are you from?' would you say 'I'm a Dumfriesshire man? Or if somebody did say that to you, what would it mean to you?

KB: A good question. How to answer it? I mean I've, I like Dumfries. Ah like Dumfries, ah like Lochmaben too. Lochmaben and Dumfries jist to me, they're close together, the same in a sense. A Dumfries man, aye, ah've never really kinna thought o it that way' ah don't think. Ah don't think so. No, well, I like Dumfries, ah like to think we've got quite a good quality o life here, actually, in Dumfries. Ah've never really thought of maself as a, if somebody said to me, ah've never thought of saying, ah'm proud to be living in Dumfries, ah've never though it that way.

MM: Ok.

KB: Ah'm proud to be Scottish, by the way [*laughs*]. That maybe comes into it but Dumfries, ah've never thought of it that way. I think the rest of me considers, one guy did say to me quite recently from Lochmaben 'Ah'm proud to be from Lochmaben' ah'm proud' and ah'd never thought of a thing like that. So he obviously thought different from me. He did say that, in actual fact. He was drunk at the time, mind you [*laughter*].

MM: Are Dumfries and Galloway's a, is a region now, you know, does that mean anything to you. If you're, it's such a very big place and Galloway's Galloway and Dumfriesshire's they seem quite different places.

KB: Aye, well I see it as Dumfries and Galloway just the same.

**32m 26s.**

MM: Do you? Ok.

KB: I just see it as the same right enough. It's like just a name with the areas called Dumfries and Galloway. And it's a good area, right enough. And Galloway, going down to the Galloway area's very nice too because ah'm often down there, plenty places to walk, [?] hill-walking and all that sort of stuff, very good area. It's a place, I think, that's a wee bit maybe ignored at times. The visitors don't seem to, visitors seem to go straight up north. You see them go up the motorway, they don't come into this area too much. But, aye, Dumfries and Galloway is, I think is a good area and it'll have changed quite a bit as well. I don't know so much about the Galloway, away down Stranraer area.

MM: Yes.

KB: Ah don't know that too well, I've been there a few times. The Stranraer folk are different from us, they talk different. Call them Galloway Irish.

MM: Well, the accent is very different.

KB: The accent's different, aye it is. It is quite a nice accent, actually, there's nothing wrong with their accent. They just talk different from us.

MM: Then, if you go over to Langholm there, the accent's different again.

KB: Different again, Annan's the same.

MM: Aye.

KB: Annan, they have a kinna funny way of talking in Annan too. And it's not far from us [*laughter*]. That's just common all over, isn't it?



MM: Yes, indeed, well, I'll ask my colleague, Caroline, who's been listening if there's anything I've missed.

CM: Well, there was a couple of things I was just curious about because you had that spell when you were with the grocer and you were quite young and with the ICI. And I wondered if, in either of those places, there were any sort of initiations or any, you know, tricks that were played maybe when someone was about to get married or when they joined, you know, when they joined in somewhere like the grocers or, you know, you come across things like being sent for a long stand or whatever? You know, is there anything like that happened? I was just thinking, you know, in both of these instances, there might have been.

**34m 33s.**

KB: I remember when I was, I cannae remember what it was now, I was sent for something, I was annoyed [*laughter*]. Ah cannae remember what it was now. They did, they did send me for something, ah'm sorry ah can't remember what it was.

CM: That's all right.

KB: There was that, it did happen.

CM: Is that when you were in the shop.

KB: In the shop, aye, I was only fifteen, didn't know anything then.

MM: Just a boy.

CM: Or tartan paint.

KB: Eh?

CM: That's the other one I've heard, tartan paint, being sent to get a tin of tartan paint [*laughter*].

**ICI 35m 09s.**

KB: Ah've no come across that one, right enough. Ah think at the ICI there was things done there, like if people got married, right enough, they were often tied to a lamppost in the town centre and dressed up and aw that sort o stuff. They did that type of thing then, right enough. I never, the only stuff was that thing wi the, in the Maypole, they sent ye for something. Funny, ah'd forgotten that.

CM: You'll remember it.

KB: I'll have tae try think what that was. I feel an idiot.

CM: I mean, relating to the ICI and the wedding thing I was wondering, if it being such a big employer in the town, was it, were you sort of constantly seeing people about the town that you knew from that environment?

KB: Oh aye, aye.

**35m 57s.**

CM: Yea.

KB: Ye did.

CM: And did it feel like quite a community within a community?

KB: Aye, we were on shifts and ye got to know the folk on your shifts well, the other shifts you got to know their faces well but ye could never remember their names because you really didn't know them very well. But you only met these people when you turned over the shifts. But outside the ICI, I remember we used to, the swimming pool was open by then, we used to go swimming off night shift and things like that so ye had a bit of social life within the ICI, it was quite a good social life. We'd dances and, the shift dances, and football.

MM: Right.

KB: Aye we used to play a lot of football, in the summer league, there was that many in you could get more, I don't know how many teams there were, eight or nine different teams within the ICI. Because they were all kinna my age group in a sense, well there would be some older, mind you, football was quite popular then, there used to be a lot of football then.

MM: Curling, at all?

KB: No, never took to curling. And there's a curling rink at Lockerbie, too. Ah never, ah liked skating, mind you.

MM: Did you?

KB: Aye, aye, ah've still got ma, ah bought a set of skates when ah was about eighteen year old, still got them.

MM: Have you?

KB: Aye, still got them. The lochs at Lochmaben, used tae freeze over.

MM: Right.

KB: And ah used tae stay not too far away and ah bought them because the lochs were frozen, they were frozen quite regularly then, you'd skate on them. Ah've used them, since ah've moved up here they still freeze over but not very much now.

MM: Not so thick, maybe.

**37m 19s.**

KB: Aye ye need it a certain, a certain thickness before you're allowed on to it.

MM: Yes, aye.

KB: And ah did a few, ah went to the ice rink a few times in Lockerbie skating but ah didnae like it very much, it's too busy and the ice was never that good. You get the ice on the lochs, it's just like that. There it's aw churned up. However, ah must admit the Lockerbie curlers are doing well, they were in the Olympics, not the Olympics, aye the Olympics.

MM: No, the Olympics, aye. There are three lassies in Lockerbie and David Murdoch, I don't know if you've ever heard I him, he's won World Champion, he used to live next door to me. So famous, but not me.

CM: I think that's a [ ? ] of the interview. I mean one of the last questions, maybe, ah've got is with ICI then, you've got a community within a community and it's almost like a big family, isn't it?

KB: It is actually, aye.

CM: And then ah'm thinking when you went to the insurance, you're almost like, in folkloric terms, we would think of you as like the [?] in a story, that you're sort of off the community but because you've got all that information and people confide in you, you're sort of at the periphery as well. Did you feel that that was the case?

KB: No, no really. Maybe in a way, aye. Ah think that in the Prudential too the other agents, we got together quite a bit,, ye had tae get together to talk to each other and to sort your problems, you know, your work colleagues and that, because you were on your own an awful lot working and once a week we'd meet on a Wednesday morning and talk because ah think that was quite important, talking to each other. Listening to their problems in association with your problems and you felt 'Ah'm not alone in the world.' It's quite a lonely job working wi the, not only lonely in a sense, you talk to people but you weren't talkin to your colleagues, you were [?] together but it was a different thing. I quite liked it, mind you, ah liked being on ma own working, ah did. We had a wee bit social like in the Prudential too, mind ye, which was normal.

CM: Just the other thing I was going to ask, maybe that was the reason you were saying you met on a Wednesday morning because when you said before that you were busy Mondays and Fridays and ah was thinking 'I wonder if that's to do with the half-day closing or something on a Wednesday, if that, but it was maybe more because of the...

**39m 57s.**

KB: That was quite a common thing apparently, when we were agents, that that happened. We went in on a Wednesday morning with our accounts etc, we had to go into the office in any case, and then go to the bank and bank your money, etc, etc and then speak to your manager and then that was only for a wee bit time in the morning and then you just went wi the lads to the café for a coffee and a blether. Sometimes the snooker place or wherever, you just, something like that, actually.

MM: Yes, aye.

KB: And then, it was like a half-day, a Wednesday, used to go home and work in the garden. Funny, my wife thought we were allowed that. She got the wrong end of the stick [*laughter*]. 'Oh, no it's his half-day,' 'Look ah don't get a half day, ah just do that.'

MM: Gardening leave [*laughter*].

CM: Was the Wednesday the half day shop closing in-

KB: Thursday, in Dumfries, it's Thursday, aye.

MM: Thursday.

KB: Ay ah remember that.

MM: Aye it was a Wednesday in Edinburgh, in Leith.

KB: It was a Wednesday? There's not much of that happening nowadays, is there?

MM: Not at all, I don't think I've seen it anywhere for a long time.

KB: No, don't think so. There's a shop in Lochmaben shuts half-day on a Wednesday. That's the only one I know of.

MM: Well, even to the extent I was in a supermarket in between Christmas and New Year and the chap in there was telling me they were open on Christmas Day, which I was quite sad to hear that to be honest, you know, I think everybody should be allowed some time away.

KB: They should be and we can get by without shopping at Christmas Day in life.

**41m 33s.**

MM: Of course we can.

KB: How hard is it? I think it's greedy for money wi big companies.

MM: Aye, the thing that surprised me more was that they had customers to get their messages on Christmas Day.

KB: Maybe had nothing else to do.

MM: Nothing else to do, maybe, aye [*laughter*]. That's grand, is there anything else you'd like to say?

KB: No, ah can't particularly think of anything else to say.

MM: Grand.

KB: I hope what ah've said's ok to you.

MM: Absolutely wonderful, aye. Thank you, I'll just finish the recording at this stage, Ken, thanks very much.

**End of interview.**