

Interviewee: Cyril and Dorothy Wise (CW; DW)	Interviewer: Mark Mulhern (MM); Caroline Milligan also present (CM)
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MM: Hello.

DW: Hello.

CW: Hello.

MM: I've got a few wee notes here that I'll refer to myself just to keep myself straight.

DW: Right.

MM: But perhaps you could both start by giving me your name and, if you're willing, your ages, please?

DW: My name is Dorothy Wyse, I was Dorothy Newall, and I'm seventy-seven.

MM: Thank you.

DW: Am I? Yes.

CW: And my name is Cyril Wise and I am eighty-four.

MM: Grand. And are you both from Dumfries, originally?

CW: I am originally from Moniaive which is...

DW: Just outside, I was born and bred in Dumfries and I've lived in Dumfries all my life.

MM: Have you?

DW: Yes.

MM: Right, and yourself Cyril, have you lived anywhere other than Moniaive and Dumfries?

CW: No.

Newall's Toy Shop 01m 07s.

MM: Grand. Well the main subject of what we're going to talk about today is Newall's Toy Shop. Perhaps you could start and tell me when it, when did it all begin?

01m 09s.

CW: Right. It all started at the beginning of the Second World War.

MM: Uhuh.

DW: Prior to that Mother and Father lived in Dumfries and ma father was a confectioner/baker. Sadly, he had deaf and dumb parents and he was the only child that had

been affected, he was deaf in one ear. So he wouldn't be accepted for the Forces and he was made to go into the Fire Service in Dumfries.

MM: Right.

DW: In those days the Fire Service didn't have as many things they did for the people round about so they had a lot of time that they sat about and ma dad just couldn't do that, he was very handy with his hands and he started making things. And one of the things ah remember was windmills, he made wooden toys. Again in those days there was no regulations about wood and paint and all the rest of it but he made wooden toys and he made windmills and all sorts of things and he used to sell them to a little toy shop in English Street, and ah can't remember its name, it's gone.

CW: Miss Somebody.

DW: Yep. But anyway, he used to sell what he made to this little shop in English Street and after the War he had kicked out of the Fire Service and he thought 'Right, I'd like to start a little shop.' And he had wheelbarrows and dolls' cots and dolls' houses and all sorts of things that he made and he started in 8 High Street. Mother and him ran it on their own for quite a long time and then they employed one person with them, a lady called Margaret. Margaret Cravens was her maiden name, wasn't it?

CW: Mm.

DW: Yep. And then ah can't remember the exact year, but ah can find out, he bought the property in Friars Vennel, which used to be a second-hand shop and he traded there until ma father's death in 1967.

MM: Right.

DW: By that time I was in the business, I shouldn't have been, I was going to be an accountant. I worked in an accountant's office for a number of years, I left school at sixteen. And Father hadn't been just too good health-wise and he asked if I could go in and help in the office, which ah did, and ah never left.

03m 34s.

MM: Right.

DW: In 1970/71 we bought the shop next door to Friars Vennel, it was called Hay's Fruit Shop, and we made the two small shops into one big shop and that still is as it stands today. Now that's basically the history.

MM: Yes, and if we could revisit the first shop then.

DW: Right.

MM: For how long would it have been that your father made all the toys that he sold, do you think?

DW: Well, ah think he would carry on until it got to the stage that the shop was getting too busy for him to do it and more reps were coming to sell him things because just after the War you couldn't get toys.

CW: No, no.

DW: You know, there just wasn't the stock that you could get so he made as much as he could. He even made lead soldiers.

MM: Did he?

DW: Yes, he had a machine, he was very sort of crafty person and he liked to make things.

MM: How did he make them? Did he cast them?

DW: He had moulds, yes, he had moulds. He had property in Brooms Road which he had moulding machines in and he used to have that, he used to make Christmas decorations from crepe paper. He used to make Christmas crackers.

MM: Did he?

DW: And we even carried the Christmas cracker kit on for many, many years. And they were sold all over the country.

4m 55s.

MM: So you could make your own crackers, and put what you wanted into them. Ah, very good.

DW: Ah could go on for ever.

MM: Oh well, please do [*laughter*].

DW: One of the first things, ever, that Dad sold in the shop, I always remember him telling us was a wheelbarrow that he had made, a wooden wheelbarrow. But he made all sorts of things but gradually toys started to come back on the market so he would buy more things and I can still remember some of the things in that shop, I was only ten at the time when it started, but nowadays wouldn't be accepted because of all the rules and regulations.

MM: Yes, aye.

DW: And you can see some of them on the Antiques Roadshow.

MM: Really?

DW: Yes [*laughs*].

MM: Gee whiz.

DW: Oh, what else can ah tell you, there's so, so much.

MM: What aspect of that did you dad enjoy most, of running the shop? Would it be-?

DW: The making of the things.

MM: Was it the making of the things?

DW: Definitely, without a doubt.

MM: So, he was a craftsman, [?]?

DW: Definitely. Wood work. And that's rubbed off on ma brother, he does a lot of...

CW: Wood turning.

DW: Wood turning, he makes some beautiful things. Anyway it was the making of things because once I came into the business and it's another story why he came into the business [laughter] because he's a farmer.

06.04s.

MM: Right [laughs], ok.

DW: If you want to hear that side.

MM: That's a different world.

DW: Completely different. But I'll tell you that side of it as well.

MM: Aye.

DW: After Cyril met we finally got engaged and Cyril was working on a farm. The plan was...

CW: To move down south, to Devon, to manage a farm down there. With my older brother.

MM: Uhuh.

CW: But that fell through because the accommodation was terrible.

DW: In those days there wasn't, you couldn't send photographs through the internet and things like that, you just took people's word in letters.

CW: So I ended up in the toy shop.

DW: Well, there's a wee bit here, but Dad offered him a job for six months until he found something else.

MM: Six months. And how long ago was that?

DW: That was in 195?, late fifties. We never let him away.

CW: No.

DW: No. That's interesting, you can read that later.

MM: Right. Now, I'm interested in, you say that the business grew.

DW: Yes.

MM: And then it sort of outgrew the premises in the High Street and moved to the Vennel.

DW: Yep.

MM: Was the Vennel a busier shopping street than the High Street, would you say?

CW: It was the busiest street in Dumfries.

07m 24s

MM: Uhuh.

CW: Busier than the High Street, because we had all the buses come in from the country and they parked on the White Sands at the bottom of the Vennel and the people came up the Vennel and a lot of them did their shopping all the way up, we had every kind of shop, chemists and...

MM: So you had everyone passing your door, then?

CW: They would just be passing the door, aye.

MM: Right, yea.

CW: But your dad, he progressed into manufacturing.

DW: Wooden things.

MM: Did he?

CW: Wooden.

DW: Yea.

MM: What sort of things?

DW: Gifts, wooden gifts.

MM: Right.

CW: And they were for the Edinburgh or Blackpool, you know.

MM: Oh, did he?

CW: And when he bought the shop from Mr Foley.

DW: Foley's.

CW: He discovered this little wooden bank.

DW: Wooden money box...

CW: A wooden money box.

DW: ...shaped like a stool.

CW: And what was the [?].

08m 17s.

DW: 'This little boy is no fool, his pennies all go in the stool' [*laughter*]. Or 'This little girl.' Now, this was a little wooden, like an old-fashioned stool with a slit in the top and Dad started making those.

MM: And did they sell [?]?

DW: They sold. And he sold hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and that started him on the gift side.

MM: Right.

DW: And he eventually bought premises out at Heathhall and he had a little factory out there.

MM: Right.

DW: And that progressed right up until his death and we carried it in for a year but we just found we couldn't cope with them both so we had to sell that. But he sold all over this country, he sold, and ah mean he could personalise them by putting, you know how you used to buy gifts with the name of the town you'd visited.

MM: Yes, aye.

DW: 'A gift from Blackpool,' 'A gift from the Lake District,' or wherever it was and he had reps who worked independently.

CW: Agents.

DW: Agents, rather, they weren't reps they were agents.

MM: Across Scotland or-?

DW: And England and Wales right down to the south, yes.

MM: Gee, whiz. So he was an entrepreneur as well as well as a craftsman.

DW: Oh yea, he was, definitely, definitely.

MM: Where do you think that came from? Where do you think his facilities [?]?

DW: I don't really know. Well, his grandmother-?

CW: Well, well, that's a st-, another story. Who was the-? It was Walter Newall, there's a thing just been up at the...

09m 46s.

DW: Museum.

CW: ...well we've traced your...

Walter Newell 09m 51s.

DW: Well, we think there's a connection with Walter Newall and our family.

MM: Right.

DW: We haven't got the final connections yet. Ma brother says he has. And he was a famous architect and he designed Moat Brae, libraries, but he designed all over the country as well, and the Museum could tell you a lot about Walter Newall and it's very interesting.

CW: He was in the wood.

DW: Oh, he was a carpenter as well.

CW: He was a carpenter as well [?].

MM: Aye.

DW: But both his mother and father worked with their hands. His father was a tailor and his mother, these were, they were both deaf and dumb, and she was a dressmaker. So they all worked with their hands and she did beautiful needlework, things like that.

MM: Quite detailed work.

DW: Very detailed work. And so whether that...

MM: Yes.

DW: ...because ah mean, as far as ah know, ma father was the only one, well apart from his sister, she was quite crafty, Aunt Madge.

CW: Aye, she was, aye.

DW: But ah don't think the other brothers were, there were another three brothers, there was four boys and one girl, but Dad always liked to make things.

MM: Yes.

DW: And he couldn't sit on his bottom and do nothing, he had to have, you know.

11m 04s.

MM: And do you, do you have the facility with your hands, are you crafty?

DW: Yes, yes.

MM: Yes?

DW: I do a lot of this.

MM: Excellent.

DW: I do lots of knitting and things like that. I like crafty things but knitting is more relaxing than a lot of the others and ah'm getting lazy in ma old age [*laughter*].

CW: But your brother, who's just retired is a Sheriff.

DW: He's the clever one.

CW: He was the clever one, he knew it all. He has gone into wood turning.

MM: Has he?

DW: Oh, he's made some...

CW: Up in Aberdeenshire, so he makes some beautiful stuff, you know.

DW: ...beautiful things.

MM: Really?

DW: And even I like wood and he gave us a beautiful wooden bowl he made and we've filled it with apple, wooden apples and oranges.

MM: Oh really.

DW: But anyway, that's away beside the [?].

Whitesands flooding 11m 52s.

MM: Now, the one thing I know about, anything that's built just off Whitesands is that it probably floods now and again.

DW: Yes, we have had the flood in the shop.

MM: Have you?

12m 04.

DW: A number of times. That's, ah don't know what year that was, no that was '77, but that's the furniture shop just down from us.

MM: So, it's a photograph, for the recorder, it's a photograph showing...

CW: They walked out and just left everything and the whole shop was flooded.

MM: How high up would you say that is?

DW: Oh, it came in to our shop, there's our shop.

CW: Two to three feet. Aye that's an old...

DW: It's not a good picture.

CW: Is that the one with the boat?

MM: Yea, it's got a boat.

DW: I've got better ones at home. That's part of our shop, it came in there about eighteen inches, at the high place.

MM: So, for the recorder, this is another photograph showing the shop frontage with flooded water and a boat on the pavement [*laughter*]. Gee whiz. I think that's somebody standing with waders on outside.

DW: Probably, probably.

MM: Aye it looks like it.

CW: Oh aye, we had our MP was down. I don't know if it was that time.

DW: I've got more pictures at home if we need any more.

CW: Sir Hector.

MM: Sir Hector Munro?

CW: Aye, aye, finished up Lord Munro, you know.

MM: Oh, that's, this photograph's dated 31st October 1977. Remarkable.

DW: That's the same date.

13m 13s.

MM: And it's happening yet, because there was a few weeks ago?

DW: It's happening yet. I don't know if it came into what was our shop or not.

MM: No.

DW: I really don't know but I would imagine it might have done, really, I really don't know, we didn't go down to see. It left such a mess, but having a farmer in the family, he knew how to get rid of mud. He got rid of mud with the water, rather than let the water go and then have to clear up the mud. We were the best organised shop in Friars Vennel for getting rid of the flooding and mud.

MM: Good. Well, that brings us on to you Cyril. How did you find the change from, you'd aspired to be a farmer, or you had been a farmer, to working indoors.

DW: Difficult, difficult.

CW: It was difficult, you know, used to being outside and it was so warm in the shops and that but ah gradually came, once we started buying the stuff together that's when it came in.

MM: Yes.

CW: And we used to do window dressing because first impressions, you know, and somebody passing your window, you only get ten seconds, at the most, but you got ten seconds to stop somebody passing your shop.

MM: Yes, yes.

DW: So from there it progressed and at that time I had lots and lots of companies come in from different manufacturers.

DW: That's no really what he asked you.

MM: No, that's fine.

DW: He asked you about you, how you adapted.

CW: Oh aye, oh right.

DW: With difficulty.

CW: But ah certainly enjoyed it after we started doing the window dressing.

14m 46s.

MM: Aye.

DW: Well, you see, Dad was still there to begin with, and he was out at the factory most of the time so we were most on our own, but he was still the boss.

MM: Right.

DW: Sadly, Dad died very young, he was only in his late fifties. And we got thrown in at the deep end, this wasn't what was intended, Dad had intended taking the manufacturing side even further and letting Cyril and I get on with the shop. And we were starting to buy in our own before Dad passed away, fortunately, and, but one thing ah remember when I was just started in the shop, after being in the accountant's office, Dad talked to me a lot and ah used to say to him 'Why don't you tell Mum this?', 'You're in the business, Dorothy, you're here, you've got to know', 'Och' ah says 'Ah don't need to know yet'.

MM: Passing on-.

DW: But little did I know he was passing on a lot of things that I found and ah didn't realise, going into my head and I would use it later, in later life, when we had to go on our own, and that was not easy. Especially with some of the reps.

MM: In what way?

DW: Oh, they looked down on a woman.

MM: Oh, did they, indeed?

DW: Oh yes.

CW: Oh aye.

DW: A woman in business in those days was not capable.

CW: No.

MM: Oh really, and did they make that quite plain [?]?

DW: Some of them did.

CW: Some of them told ye how to run the shop.

DW: They were trying to tell me, and this put my back up, I thought 'I'll show them.'

16m 09s.

MM: Well, it was your business.

DW: But that didn't make any difference. We were young in those days, I was only sort of about thirty when Dad died. We were married, yes, we were definitely married by then, and I was only thirty, about thirty when Dad died, and in those days that was quite young to be in business because things were much more old-fashioned and these reps came in, I mean one of them came in with a bowler hat on, but the one that really got my back up was, I think it was the Silver Cross rep.

CW: Silver Cross, aye.

DW: I can't even remember what he said now. Can you?

CW: Mr Miller.

DW: Aye, but can you remember what it was he said?

CW: No, no, I can't.

DW: It took a while to get Cyril involved in the actual business side of the business because Dad had taught me all the financial side and all the books and managing the staff and things like that. Cyril was only going to be there for six months [*laughs*] and he found, I think he would find it more difficult until we started buying together, we started going to shows together, we started seeing the reps together and we [?] found it very, well I found it satisfying because Cyril left the financial side to me, he was the best PR man in the business with the staff.

MM: Right.

DW: You were.

CW: And we had a good stock control system.

DW: Fantastic stock control system.

CW: Before computers, we had a stock control system.

DW: It was all done with books.

MM: Right, uhuh.

17m 42s.

DW: And a few years before we retired we thought we should get computers, but if we had done that the staff we had were all about ages with us, so it would have taken time to sort of train them and they could manage our system. So we just kept it.

MM: And is that an important part of running a shop?

CW: Oh yes.

DW: Definitely.

CW: Running a business.

DW: Running a business because if you buy, I can give you an instance of a business, I'll not name any names, but one business who had no stock control, well couldn't have had a stock control system, they bought how many Christmas trees? Five hundred Christmas trees.

CW: Five hundred Christmas trees.

MM: Right.

CW: Sold two-fifty.

MM: Right.

CW: Next year they bought five hundred.

MM: Why?

DW: Exactly. Because they didn't have a stock control system and they did-, that was just one instance, I mean it could have been anything.

MM: Yea, but that's one product, aye.

DW: It could have been anything in your stock.

CW: Ah think with a business, we found you'd got to be one step in front of the rest, you know. You couldn't sit back and expect the people to come in, you had to sell yourself.

DW: One thing we did, I don't think there's much in here about it but we used to have, our business was children.

MM: Yes.

18m 58s.

DW: It was children so what we, I mean you were great when it came to the publicity side and dressing windows for the children and we did a lot of that, special windows.

MM: And you won awards for your windows.

DW: A lot of them, yes. Ah was looking for the actual, did you bring the picture of the window.

MM: I think when you came into the shop you showed us a magnificent picture.

DW: Probably showed ye some. There's one o the Christmas windows and that was a UK one we won.

MM: Marvellous.

DW: But we did them all the time, we did special windows at Easter, we did extra special ones at Christmas, we did windows for a product. Playmobil brought out a new product, a number of years ago, called the One Two Three Playmobil figures for under-fives.

MM: Right.

DW: And a lot of the forms had competitions and we used to do our windows but Cyril won the prize because he always made a logo.

MM: Right.

CW: A sort of catchphrase.

DW: Catchphrase, and for that product, it was 'Growing up with Playmobil, you just can't measure the pleasure.'

MM: That's wonderful.

DW: And Playmobil used it in the catalogue. It won that-.

CW: And it was a German company, Playmobil was a German company. And they didn't think much of the British retailers.

MM: Did they not?

DW: No.

CW: But when their catalogue came out the next year...

20m 19s.

DW: What was in the middle of it?

CW: ...right across the middle of the catalogue was 'Growing up with Playmobil, you just can't measure the pleasure.'

DW: So, I phoned my British rep.

MM: And how much did they pay you for that?

DW: Nothing. So, I phoned, I knew him quite well, and ah said 'Have you seen your new catalogue, Jim?', 'No, Dorothy, why?' I said 'Well, have a look at the centre pages and look along the top and what will you see?' He said 'What will ah see?' Ah said 'Cyril's slogan' and...

MM: And did they, put a credit to you or anything?

DW: ...No, and ah said 'They didn't ask if they could use it, they didn't say they were going to use it. I mean we would have been thrilled to bits.

MM: Of course.

DW: Because it was something Cyril had thought up and they must have thought it, but he said 'They don't think much of the retailer', 'Well, ah said 'Well, tell them from me that I don't think much of their German manners.

MM: Yes, quite.

Lockerbie Disaster 21m 12s.

CW: But another thing ah don't know whether it was, was the Lockerbie disaster.

MM: Yes, aye.

CW: Well, that just happened just before Christmas.

DW: Two or three days before Christmas.

CW: And we didn't know the extent of the damage but we thought some of these kiddies are maybe not getting toys, some of them might even be killed so what we did, we got in touch with all the manufacturers that we dealt with.

21m 31s.

DW: Well, the ones we could, the big ones.

CW: Aye, the bog ones, and said 'Would you come on board and give us some credit and we'll take toys over to Lockerbie?' which we did.

DW: We did.

CW: Aye.

DW: We managed to get fifteen hundred pounds worth of credit, verbally, over the phone, from a lot of our manufacturers, they were fantastic. And we took it over, it was the day before Christmas Eve, the night before Christmas Eve, we took a huge vanload of things over and quite a lot of people came in and said, you know, wasn't that good and appreciated. But, you know, at that time you said 'What can we do' you know, you just didn't think what you could do at that time.

MM: Well no, but that's a real and immediate thing to do.

DW: It was, it was lovely that, I was surprised at how easy it was to do because the manufacturers, they said 'No problem.' Somebody gave you two or three hundred pounds

and somebody gave you a hundred and somebody gave you, and you know, it all mounted up and this is what we took over.

Newall's sale promotions 22m 31s.

CW: We used to do promotions for the different firms.

MM: Yes.

CW: And we'd have a specific day when The Dukes of Hazard car was there. Darth Vader, well, Star Wars, who else had we? Oh, a lot more.

DW: Och, we'd a lot more.

CW: He Man.

DW: He Man.

CW: And we were accused by some of the other shop-keepers of having too many people in the street.

22m 57s.

MM: What!

CW: We couldn't see into their windows. There was one instance we had...

MM: There's nothing worse than people in shops [*laughter*].

CW: ...they were due to start at two o' clock so I phoned the local police station and ah said , you know, 'There was quite a crowd gathering, could we have some help?', 'There's a constable on the way down, sir' he says. We finished up with five police men and two traffic wardens to control them.

MM: Really, and what was that for, can you remember?

DW: I think it was Darth Vader.

MM: Was it Darth Vader?

DW: Ah think it was Darth Vader.

CW: It was Darth Vader.

DW: But there is another nicer story about the Dukes of Hazard car.

MM: Uhuh.

DW: There was, it may be nice, it is nice in a way, but it was a car that opened doors because this guy drove it up to let the kids see it. But he said 'Ah don't want them jumping in and out of this car.' I said 'Fair enough' so we sort of cordoned it off. There was at that time where the car park is now, a piece of spare ground that belonged to friends of ours and they allowed us to use it for these things. So this couple came up, they had two wee boys, and they said 'Do you think wee Jimmy could sit in the car?' 'Oh' ah says 'Oh ah don't know' and this wee boy was just standing, you see and ah thought 'Och, wee soul' so ah went across to George, who had brought the car, and ah said 'Look, is there any chance he could just sit in to get his picture taken?' 'Go on then but tell them not to climb in the windows'. Ah says 'Ok' so we

got a picture taken and away they went. About an hour or two later they came back and they brought me a beautiful box of chocolates. I said 'What's this for?' Well, wee Jimmy had been interfered with by a man, and the only thing that he ever wanted was to sit in a Duke's of Hazard car.

MM: Oh really?

24m 42s.

DW: And he had written to, at that time, Jimmy Saville.

MM: Jimmy Saville.

CW: Jim'll Fix it.

DW: Aye, Jim'll Fix it and they said 'They couldn't fix it but you did'

MM: Oh, that's wonderful.

DW: And they really appreciated it.

MM: What a lovely thing.

DW: Uhuh, wasn't it, this wee boy and right enough I could see beside his brother that he was very quiet, that that was all he wanted.

MM: I bet you he remembers that to this day.

DW: I hope so, I hope so.

CW: There's a story about a wee girl she had a terrible skin...

DW: Allergic to something or other and she had to drink some horrible stuff and there was a little article in the local paper about this little girl and she was Barbie daft. The only thing she wanted from her mum was a Barbie cup or a Barbie mug to drink this horrible stuff from.

MM: Oh, right, aye.

DW: So ah thought 'Gosh, ah've never heard of this, I wonder if there is?' So I phoned the rep and ah told him, he got me one, I don't know where from.

CW: Probably from America, I would imagine.

DW: I don't know where it came from but he got one and he actually came down and he presented the wee girl with it and he gave her two or three Barbie dolls.

MM: Oh, lovely.

DW: So we've had some lovely stories.

MM: Aye, aye.

DW: We had a baby left in the shop once [*laughter*].

25m 54s.

MM: Ok.

DW: Well, a wee toddler, and it was a Saturday and the shop was quite busy and then we had a lull and we saw this wee kid playing with some toys. It was fine and we looked around and couldn't see anybody with him. So ah thought 'I wonder what's happened here?' So minutes later this family came running up, back up the street, [*panting sounds*]. Mummy thought the eldest daughter had him.

MM: Right.

DW: The eldest daughter naturally thought Mummy had him.

MM: Of course, aye.

DW: I said 'Oh he was happy' [*laughter*].

Toy manufacture 26m 31s.

MM: He was in a toy shop [*laughter*]. What, I was just thinking, your father started off making toys in wood and that's the material that he liked.

DW: Yes, yes.

MM: But, I take it over the years, you saw change in the materials used to make toys?

DW: Oh definitely.

MM: And ah guess most toys are all plastic now, are they, or-? How would you describe the change over the years?

CW: Ye had a big machine, a huge thing, that made the plastic farm animals, do you remember that?

DW: Massive.

CW: Aye it was a huge thing, ye put in the wee pellets o plastic and it came out into the wee moulds.

DW: I think it was more in the shop, how did we adapt in the shop? You had no choice.

MM: Aye.

DW: Ye know, in the shop.

27m 13s.

MM: Was there a sudden shift away from wooden toys to the plastic or did they just-?

DW: No it was a gradual shift.

MM: A gradual thing.

DW: Because, I mean, bear in mind Dad started in '46.

MM: Yes.

DW: Ah didn't come into the shop until '56/7/8.

MM: Right.

DW: Round about there, sort of came in about '58.

MM: Right.

DW: So, I mean, this would be a gradual thing, we still had a lot of wooden toys as I-, even latterly we had wooden toys.

MM: Did you, still?

DW: Oh yes.

CW: Beautiful dolls' houses.

DW: Tell them about, the story about this lady came into you. Are you interested in stories like this?

MM: Yes, indeed, aye.

DW: Lady came in to you to buy a dolls' house for her granddaughter, her daughter had told her to buy a Lundby one.

CW: So ah showed her, ah said 'But ah'm gonna let ye see another one, which ah think is much nicer.' And it was it was beautiful with a detached roof and beautiful old fashioned wee windows and the flowers and the grandmother bought it.

DW: The phone rang, next day. 'Good morning, Newall's Toy Shop.' 'May I speak to Mr Wyse please?' 'May I ask who's calling?' Mrs So-and-So.

MM: She's no happy.

28m 25s.

DW: She's not happy. Passed it over to Cyril and ah saw him smiling. What did she say?

CW: She said 'That was the best thing ah've done for a long time is to buy that dolls' house.'

MM: Really.

DW: Daughter was thrilled to bits. But the other things that we sold a lot of wooden was farms, forts, garages.

CW: Aye.

DW: They're far, far stronger.

MM: Uhuh.

Christmas Club 28m 50s.

CW: What we had in those days was a Christmas Club.

MM: Right.

CW: People hadn't the money to come and just buy it at Christmas Eve so they came in and joined the Christmas Club and put so much away each week.

MM: And would they have a wee book or stamps?

CW: They had a wee book aye.

DW: A book.

CW: And we'd thousands, thousands of-.

DW: Over a thousand customers in the Christmas Club.

CW: We might have had two or three thousand items laid away.

MM: Gee whiz.

CW: If ye lost one, didn't matter if ye had two thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, that one, we never lost one.

DW: Never lost one parcel.

MM: Well done.

29m 29s.

DW: Our system, that's my, I'm good at that, organising. Our system was perfect. We never, ever, and Christmas Eve, before we closed the shop, the staff brought any parcels still not collected and we always checked to see if they belonged to somebody and were paid, or if it was for a birthday in January, sometimes they were for birthdays in January.

MM: Uhuh, and did you do deliveries at all?

DW: Oh yes.

MM: Ye did.

DW: But not till about ten o'clock, eleven o'clock at night. Once, 'Ye haven't' delivered ma stuff.' Ah said 'Well, I'll check, if ah come down to the shop we'll double check and see. So away we went back to the shop and it was ma brother that had delivered it and ah looked at the delivery note and on the delivery note it said 'Please deliver to neighbour.' So ah said to the gentleman, ah said 'Is there any way you can phone your neighbour?' 'Oh is that what the wife organised?'

MM: Oh the wife, aye.

DW: And that's where it was.

CW: There's another story about a very distraught mother. She phoned up on Christmas Eve and she said 'Ah wonder if you can help me?' She'd got a little one, dolls pushchair...

DW: ...pram, well, pushchair, pram.

CW: ...made of fabric...

DW: You know, all the gabardine, it was a really nice one, actually.

CW: And she put it in her mother's loft to keep it out the way. When she went to collect it the mice had been at it.

MM: Aye.

CW: So, all the fabric was chewed.

DW: All the fabric.

31m 00s.

CW: Ah says 'Right, just come in and we'll go down to the shop, we'll open up the shop and see what we can find.

DW: We managed to get it.

CW: That was a satisfied customer.

MM: Did you?

DW: Oh yes, ah don't think it was the same colour but ah mean we managed to get one identical. We did lots of things like that.

MM: Do you think it's that attention to detail that makes a business successful?

CW: Aye.

DW: The attention to detail and to your customers, your customers are the main thing in your business.

CW: Aye.

DW: But the other thing is your staff.

MM: Yes, aye.

DW: Our staff were excellent, I mean we had the odd one, let's be honest, I mean everybody is not as good as everybody else. But ah mean, they are your face to the customer. Now, we're still meeting some of our staff, we were like family latterly, some of them had been with us twenty-odd years. I had one girl who came from school and she didn't leave us until we retired. So, ah mean, ah think if you're a boss you've got to see both sides of a business from the staff, it's not, even now when I say to somebody, I always say we worked together. I mean, ah never say she worked for me, we worked together, and that's how we've always, we always did it, we worked with our staff, didn't we? I mean we didn't just sort of tell them 'You've got to do this' and ah mean ah started off washing the shop windows for ma dad. And yet ah was supposed to go and learn the business and help him, but ah'd started at the bottom.

CW: There's another little saying 'You're only as good as your worst employee.'

MM: That's very true isn't it?

CW: Aye. So these are wee things that-?

32m 39s.

DW: But sadly ma Dad died very suddenly of heart trouble in 196?, I think it was seven, I can't remember the exact year.

CW: Uhuh.

DW: And ah mean that was a big, big shock to us.

MM: We didn't know what to do, we weren't expecting it, we had no sort of warning that this was going to happen and it threw us in the deep end but ah mean we managed to, we ran the manufacturing side for about a year and then we sold it.

CW: Aye, an latterly the shopkeepers in the Vennel used to say 'What are you doing next?'

MM: Really?

MM: Because they knew we could attract the crowds [*laughs*].

DW: Well, another thing that Cyril's interested in is flowers and gardening and things like that and you started off by putting hanging baskets and window boxes on the front of our shop.

MM: Well that was the photograph you showed me in the shop.

DW: Correct.

MM: All the beautiful flowers out the front.

DW: That's right.

MM: Well, we started off with about four window boxes and then each year it got better and better and we managed to get more people in the street to do it was well.

CW: Aye, we're getting back to Dumfries itself, they put in, they appointed a Town Centre Manager, with a secretary and a handyman, to look after the town centre, and they decided it needed a wee bit uplift so the Town Centre Manager got a group together and ah represented the retail trade and they had somebody from the Burns' Association and the licensed victuallers and that.

DW: Quite a lot of us.

34m 08s.

CW: And that's where it started from, ye know. We used to have awards for different premises, maybe the hotel trade, the retail etc., etc. and ah said 'Well why don't we do it for the street, get a street award to get the streets involved. Ah says 'Ah'll throw the gauntlet down for the Vennel' and we won that.

DW: Aye, you went round all the shops and encouraged them to put boxes, and window boxes and things up.

CW: Aye. Because one instance was, I was up watering the window box, the hanging baskets, rather, and four people came down the other side, two couples, and they looked across at the flowers and they came across, they didn't know who ah was and they said 'Isn't that lovely?' and looked at the windows and said 'Must go in there.' So they went in and when they came back out their comment was 'Wasn't that a lovely staff in that shop?'

MM: Oh really?

DW: I mean that was lovely for us, yes. We were very fortunate with our staff though, weren't we? We really did, we had super staff.

MM: And you see them yet, as you were saying?

DW: Yea, still see them.

MM: Still see them.

Retail change 35m 23s.

CW: Ah think latterly, when the big multiples came in with the toys and...

DW: That was the start of the end.

CW: ...aye, but we had to be more professional to, you know, to compete with them.

DW: A lot of our customers would come in and say that 'We come to you because you have something different.'

MM: Right.

DW: In the retail toy trade the multiples did what we used to call 'cherry pick'. They would take only the bestselling lines, whereas with Lego, for instance, now, I'll guarantee that you have no idea how many different Lego sets there were. In those days there were hundreds.

36m 03s.

Starting off from wee tiny ones that the kids bought with their pocket money right up to the big sets, now the multiples only bought the sort of medium to big sets, we did everything. It was the same with Playmobil. One of the biggest sellers that we used to have was all the farm tractors, implements, things like that and we used to sell cattle and sheep, individual cows, not in packets, just individually. So the kids could come in with their pocket money, they could buy one cow this week, they could buy a sheep next week and ah think that's how we kept our customers.

MM: Yes, aye.

DW: Because we did that extra and you got a better selection from us than you did in the multiples. We sold the same things but sold more. And we also sold...

MM: That sort of answers question ah was gonna ask ye, who bought the toys? Was it the...

DW: We did. Oh no, to buy them? The kids.

MM: Aye. It's the adults that had the money but was it the kids-?

DW: Through the year you would see the kids coming in with their pocket money and they would, I mean there was another series, Sylvanian Families, for the wee girls, you maybe remember those and ah mean the kids would come in with money they'd saved to have something small if they could. But, I mean, birthdays and that, Mum and Dad bought them or if it was something Mum and Dad did buy a lot and at Christmas, of course, we had our famous Christmas Club. But, I mean, we had a far, far bigger selection than you would get in the multiples and that was the reason, but we competed in price, some things we used as loss leaders, but we did compete with price and ah think that's how we managed to keep our customers.

MM: Did you have to carry an awful lot of stock, then, or were you just careful with...

DW: Well, we had to be careful, our stock control system was wonderful but we started in January, we went to a toy fair in January down in, in January, but we didn't order there.

MM: Right.

37m 52s.

DW: We just went down, we met the firms, we saw what was available and then we made appointments with all the reps to come and do our, what we called our main season order. And we could top it up whenever we wanted, some things likes of Britain's Farm Animals we would top up maybe every three months. But some things you did one order and some of the firms would allow you to set up a delivery in, maybe say June, and not pay it till later. So that was a big help to the likes of us being an independent so it let us spread our payments as well because you had to keep an eye on the money as well, you just couldn't go to the bank and say 'I need some more money, please' and they say 'What are you doing with it?' There's something else I was going to say, it's gone.

Publicity 38m 40s.

CW: Well, we used the papers a lot.

MM: The newspapers?

CW: You can tell him about that.

DW: We were rascals [*laughter*].

CW: You've got to get publicity.

DW: There's a local paper called 'The Courier', you've got to get publicity, and free publicity is the best kind you can get.

MM: Of course.

DW: So we used to run lots of competitions for the kids in the school, in the town, and it might be a colouring competition, och it was all sorts of things, ah can show you all sorts of pictures. So we'd phone up the paper and say 'Look, we're having a presentation of prize giving, prize winners' and such and such and they'd come down and take the pictures and eventually it came The Courier started to do a monthly, ah think it was, competition, wasn't it? And they'd phone up, 'Have ye got a competition for us, this week?' 'Give me ten minutes', 'Yes'. And one day it was so near Christmas we couldn't think what to do, 'Right, send a photographer down, take a picture of that window'. It was a circus window.

DW: Right.

39m 39s.

DW: It had the tigers and lions. Ah said 'Tell the kids to tell us how many lions are in that picture.' Now they had to come to the shop to see the lions, we got a picture of the shop in

the paper and then we got another picture in when we had the winners so there was three pictures, for one thing and we gave them a fifteen pound voucher.

MM: Gee whiz. Cheap at half the price [*laughs*].

DW: That was one thing we were good at, was publicity.

CW: Oh aye, uhuh.

DW: And we used to give, we used to go different places and show the toys to maybe groups of people, we had a Fisher Price evening, once, with some new stock that we took over a hotel with, the rep came from Fisher Price to give the mums a talk, and all the promotions that we did but we had competitions all the time and this is what-. I was speaking to the Standard, the local paper, and they, every now and again, have a picture of old Dumfries, things or people.

MM: Yes.

DW: And we've got some super ones, kids that were maybe seven, five, and now if they would see these pictures, they'll think they were great. So she wants to see one or two of them.

MM: Oh, she'd run them, that I'd agree with.

DW: Aye, ah've got plenty pictures if you need anything.

MM: Oh, grand.

CW: What about premature babies?

DW: Oh!

CW: Premature babies, now [*laughs*].

DW: Now, that's something. In those days you couldn't get clothes for premature babies.

MM: Right.

DW: And this lady came in and she'd had a premature baby. Ah didn't know that. She wanted to see the dolls clothes. So ah brought it out, we had some lovely wee knitted things for dolls and this is what she bought, because you couldn't buy premature baby clothes.

41m 20s.

MM: Because they would be smaller, of course.

DW: They were smaller.

MM: Just like a dolly, aye.

DW: And when she met us a number of years later, just when we'd closed the shop...

CW: Just a few years ago.

DW: Yea, she says 'I don't know why you closed that shop, ah bought ma premature baby's clothes from you and if ma daughter or her granddaughter had a premature baby, ah would have come back.' [*laughter*].

MM: Gee whiz.

DW: That's a true one, that's a true one.

MM: That's amazing, that's amazing.

DW: Yea, that was fantastic. Oh golly.

Childhood play 41m 49s.

MM: I don't know if this is a question that's possible to answer. What changes, if any, did you notice in the children over the years that you ran the shop?

DW: Oh, a big difference.

CW: Ah think TV would be-.

DW: No, I'd be thinking about the kiddies grew out of toys so much earlier.

MM: Do they?

DW: Yes.

MM: Right.

DW: We used to do a lot of what we called 'party orders', maybe a village would come and were having party for all the children in the village. And they would give us a list of the kids' names and ages. We had to choose an appropriate present, we had to wrap it and name it. And we did this a lot and ah mean in the beginning you were getting boys and girls of ten, eleven and twelve getting a toy. Not now, we could see that creeping down and our business changed slightly over the years in as much as we had a bigger baby, pre-school group, selection than we used to do.

42m 49s.

We concentrated on the model side, the likes of Lego, Meccano and Britain's, they were, all the farming stuff was a great, it was always big with us wasn't it, we sort of stocked a lot of that? But that definitely changed, I mean, in our lifetime, I mean, before, kids of twelve would go to a Christmas, a kiddie's Christmas party.

MM: And get a wee gift...

DW: No now, no now.

MM: ...a wee toy.

DW: And then it was like a sort of School Friend Annual or something that you'd give a girl of twelve. She wouldn't thank you for that now.

CW: And in the older days there was more kiddies played out in the streets. You know, on Christmas Day you'd see the girls out with their Silver Cross prams and the boys out with their scooters...

DW: Or their bikes.

CWL ...aye, their bikes. But that all changed. Another thing that affected us quite a lot was when they abolished the retail price maintenance.

MM: Right.

CW: You know, because prior to that ye had a mark-up and that was it but once they abolished that the multiples came in and...

MM: Also, they could undercut you.

CW: ...they could undercut, that's when you had the-

DW: Well, we competed with them all along.

CW: Oh aye.

DW: We definitely competed with them but we had to be careful.

44m 02s.

CW: And it's the same today with the shops...

DW: Oh, it's worse, now.

CW: ...I mean, how many independent shops have you got in the town, you know.

DW: Well, the only way that...

CW: It's the same in other towns, all over.

DW: But the only way that you could...

CW: Unless you've got something different.

DW: ...aye, as long as, that's what ah was going to say, as long as it's something different the multiples don't go into.

MM: So would you say the Vennel, the High Street are very different now from say twenty years ago even?

CW: Yes, aye.

DW: Definitely, definitely. I mean people shop differently now. And ah mean, ah'm sorry ah'm a culprit as well, ah'm lazy now. That's not true but you don't have the individual shops where you get the, where they know you, you're a person. You're not just a number that, you know, and that's what our staff did, our staff knew their customers, we had a thousand members in our Christmas Club, now between our staff I would say they would know a lot, an awful lot of those people when they came in. They would know them by name and I think that makes a big, big difference, it makes them feel...

CW: Aye, that you're special.

DW: ...that you're special.

MM: Well, it's maybe links like that that form communities.

DW: Correct, correct. But it was an interesting life.

CW: Oh, aye, aye.

MM: Well I don't want to tire you out, that's a good start. Caroline have you got any reflections at this point?

45m 25s.

CM: Well, only just a couple of wee sort of practical things. I was wondering, you talked about your father having the factory, and ah was wondering about how many people were employed there? It seemed to be quite a substantial number.

DW: Yea, there must have been about eight.

CW: Well, what he did, he manufactured things but he also had people outwith...

DW: Outworkers.

CW: ...he business doing work towards it, you know.

CM: So, in their own homes?

DW: Yes.

CW: In their own homes, you know.

DW: Yes he had home workers.

CW: And even at the, well it was the Crichton Hospital then.

DW: They had a sort of-.

CW: They had an occupational therapy department, he used to send up the stuff and the patients, they would-.

DW: There was painting to be done and there was poker work to be done.

MM: Oh really.

DW: Uhuh, dad did all the varnishing and everything back at the workshop but he had, he had quite a few staff. There was Billy and the Matthews fellow, Phoebe, Alistair, I would say he must have had about ten, in total, out there. That's, that was a staff photograph, that was permanent staff but we also had a lot of what he called temporary staff at Christmas and during the summer. During the summer we used to take students who were off college and we also had about a dozen Saturday girls because some of the married ladies didn't want to work on a Saturday so we took on quite a few Saturday girls and we still remember a lot of them. And at Christmas we always took on extra staff there and some of the staff didn't want to work full time so that was fine, we had the likes of Joy and Maureen in the mornings and then Mary and someone in the, you know, it worked in very well the way the staff worked as well.

47m 24s.

CM: Did you have occasions when you all got together?

DW: Oh yes, oh we had a staff dance every year [*laughs*].

CW: And all the reps came.

DW: We had the reps as well.

CW: Another thing we had at that time was what we called the YTS, Youth Training Scheme.

MM: Yes.

CW: And we used to get people sent to us, you know, and we would train them and I always remember one comment was, somebody had gone for a job, you see, and they said 'Where did ye get yer training?', 'Newall's Toy Shop', 'That's good enough'.

DW: 'Oh that's good, good enough. But we won, any time like this when we won something or if we won a thousand pounds worth once from that Playmobil thing we took the staff out.

MM: Did you?

DW: Yea.

MM: Oh good.

DW: We always did something special. If we did anything special and once, what did we win, we won a thousand pounds again. That was a Fisher Price one because we bought a cow.

CW: Is that the one, Michael Barrymore?

DW: No that was Playmobil.

CW: Playmobil, Michael Barrymore.

DW: Ah think it was Fisher Price.

CW: Ah think it was.

DW: And we won a cheque for a thousand pounds.

MM: And you bought a cow?

48m 32s.

DW: Well, we bought a heifer [*laughter*].

MM: Is this a real heifer?

DW: Yes.

MM: Aye, right.

DW: Well, we had a wee farm.

MM: Ok, right.

CW: We had a farm as well.

DW: See, this was the farmer.

MM: So you kept your hand in with the farm.

CW: Aye well, ah did ma farm work in the morning before nine o' clock.

DW: He was up at the back of five every morning.

CW: Six o'clock when ah got home.

DW: The only thing that really bothered me.

CW: What was that?

DW: If you had been up very early and we had a rep in, you're the rep and Cyril's sitting here, and I had to go...

CW: A nice warm day I had to go...

DW: ...nudge him, ah could see he was getting rather sleepy with the heat in the office, you see, because we'd see our reps in my office and I could just see that he was starting to not pay enough attention. But he worked so hard, he worked in the morning.

CW: Better [?] when ah tell them.

DW: Oh no.

CW: What about [?]. A lady came in the shop and she said 'Ah've got an unusual request' she says 'all ma husband wants for his birthday is a full size gorilla, can ye get one, in soft toys?' Ah said 'We'll do what we can' and we got this full size gorilla and we had a new rep calling on us, you see, and he'd never met Dorothy or I, but when he came into the shop he said 'I'm Preston Glover, come to see you.' 'Right' ah says 'Well, Mrs Wyse is upstairs but you'll have to bear with her'.

50m 19s.

DW: Mrs Wyse happened to be dressing a window at that particular time.

CW: 'She's had rather a bad migraine' [*laughter*]. So we got up to the top of the stairs, 'Now, just give a knock on the door and go in'. There was no light in the office, in Mrs Wyse's chair was the gorilla with the glasses on and a stock book [*laughter*].

DW: We were friends after that.

MM: You'd have to be really [*laughter*]. And on that note, I think we'll bring this, did you have another-?

CM: I did have one wee...

MM: Oh well, on you go on then.

CM: Is that all right?

DW: Yea.

CM: It was just about books. I mean you mentioned, you just made one wee mention about the presents that you would prepare and some things that would be, it might be an annual or whatever.

DW: Mm.

CM: And I just wondered if, you know that sort of thing that we haven't talked about at all and if there was something you wanted to say.

DW: We sold a lot of, kiddies' books were always popular because even the kiddies could buy a wee colouring book and pencils with their, and you used to get them collecting rubbers.

You used to get rubbers in hundreds of different designs and kiddies would come in with their pennies and they could collect these rubbers. But we used to sell a lot of kiddies books...

CW: Aye, Enid Blyton and that.

DW: ...but even some of the big books, the board books for the kiddies, the cloth books for the kiddies.

51m 40s.

CW: Ah aye, aye.

DW: And we had a section and another very big favourite in our shop was jigsaw puzzles.

MM: OH really?

DW: We sold thousands.

MM: Was that for adults more, do you think?

DW: Both. Mainly adults. I think it was because of the selection we had. And we used to buy in quite good quantity and when we managed to buy big we got a better discount so what we did was then, again business-wise, January, February were a quiet month. In actual fact, my father died in March and we had to do books, the annual year was January to December.

MM: Right.

DW: But before when Dad was alive. Well, because Father died in March we had to do books for January, February, March and we proved that we lost money because that had to happen. So we thought what can we do to sort of improve January? So what we did is we always had our jigsaw sale and all we did, we got good discounts because we bought in volume, it's the only way you could get any terms, independent retailers, the only way you can get terms is to buy big, so we did that and people got to now of our January Jigsaw sale and it was great, it kept the business turning over and it kept the money coming in so jigsaws were a very, very big thing with us.

CW: There's another thing. On the outskirts of Dumfries we had a manufacturer, toy manufacturer, called Denis Fisher, now he was a very, very clever man.

DW: Have you heard of Spirograph?

MM: Yes, I had one as a boy.

DW: He invented it.

CW: And Cyclex?

MM: Did he?

DW: Yes.

53m 20s.

CW: And we sold the first one.

DW: You won't have heard of Cyclex?

CW: No, maybe.

DW: Right, Denis Fisher sold his patent for Spirograph to Hasbro, I think it was Hasbro, and then he sort of came to Dumfriesshire and stayed up here with his family and he took a factory out at Heathhall and he invented the, unfortunately it came to being for a while, and then he was sued because it was too similar to Spirograph.

MM: I see.

DW: Anyway, he had Cyclex and, being a local toy shop, he asked if we would like some. I said 'Yea, definitely.' So we sold to the very first one in the world and I've got pictures of that, I've still got one or two at home.

MM: Was that similar to the Spirograph?

DW: Yes, but the Spirograph was a lot of wee individual wee wheels, this was one wheel and all the little bits inside and it was easier for a younger kiddie because all he did was put his pen in and follow it and it went round the circle.

MM: Spirograph you had pins didn't you?

DW: That's right. Well this was same idea but much, much simpler and I don't think it that Hasbro has carried it on. I think it was Hasbro, wasn't it that had it?

MM: Were they American?

DW: They were an American firm, aye, yea.

CM: I think my wee nephew had something like that.

DW: Yea, well, it was so much better for younger kiddies.

CM: For the wee ones, yes.

DW: Because they didnae need to lose their bits.

MM: Wee bits, aye, aye.

CM: But they get that sort of satisfaction -.

54m 43s.

CW: We've lots of memories of the business, here.

DW: But a lot of people did say that they'd come to us because we could always get something different that you didn't see in the multiples and I think that was one of the things, we actually tried to sort of, we had things the multiples had, in other words, the branded stuff that was highly publicised but we also had stuff that had no publicity in the newspapers, the television and some of the smaller manufacturers, we actually imported things as well. We imported Steiff. We imported a lot of German dolls. We had a lady who collected Steiff, every time we got a new selection in Joy, that's one of the girls, 'Just saw Mrs So-and-So in the street, she's coming into see them tomorrow' sort of thing, you know. But one or two collectors for that and it's the same with Yesteryear, all those kind of things.

MM: Did you have any connections with other independent toy shops?

CW: Yes.

DW: We had, at one time.

CW: There was a...

DW: Toymaster.

CW: ...buying group.

MM: How far did that extend?

DW: The whole of Scotland, the whole of Scotland. But it sort of folded, well ah think it's still going, ah really don't know but we didn't feel it was really to our advantage. It was costing us too much to be a member and then they brought out a catalogue and you had to virtually to stock everything in that catalogue so we eventually, we stayed in it for a number of years but I thought we were better at doing our own publicity.

CW: Aye, there was one instance, this county lady, Buchanan-Jardinea, of Castlemilk Estate, Castlemilk is-

DW: She was a lovely lady.

CW: Lovely lady and she used to come in and all the workers on the estate...

DW: She came into see me to begin with.

56m 36s.

CW: Right. All the workers on the estate, they got a, they had a Christmas party, so she come in with a list of all the, and we looked them out and then Lady Buchan-Jardine came back and she said 'I think that might be better giving that one to that one etc.

DW: She'd go through and decide on all the gifts. But when he started in the business she didn't want me.

CW: No, ah was a good looking lad [*laughter*]. It wasn't Lady Chatterley is was Lady Buchanan-Jardine [*laughter*].

DW: She wanted Cyril to see her.

CW: She came in this day and she had her list, you see. And there was one family: Johnny, fourteen; Jim, thirteen, right down, fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven, ten, then it jumped to eight, seven, six, five, four, three to one. And she said 'I wonder what happened that year?' [*Laughter*] I always remember that, aye.

DW: There is one thing we've never talked about.

CW: What?

DW: Fireworks.

MM: Uhuh.

DW: We used to do thousands and thousands of pounds worth of fireworks.

MM: Did you?

DW: Yes. Before all, I mean there was rules and regulations, we had a warehouse down at the foot of the street and we had a special room that they were kept in, they had to be, and they came to inspect, and we had special glass counters, but what we also did, again, I don't think they do it now, all the little villages and community councils all had their own little firework party and they would come to us with say, two hundred pounds, and we'd make them up a display so we had a lot, a lot of business with that too.

MM: And did you have that at Hogmanay as well, or, just-?

DW: Not so much, no, it was mainly just the fifth November, Halloween.

CW: But in those days, nowadays the shops have got sales all the year round.

58m 24s.

DW: Oh yes.

CW: In those days you only had a sale in January.

MM: Yea.

CW: You know, and in our street, in the Vennel, they'd be queued right up the Vennel. There was one instance where we had a Scalextric set in the window...

DW: For ten shillings.

CW: ...for ten shillings in those days.

DW: But you always had to have something like that because of the queue, you had to give them bargains.

CW: But maybe the retail was maybe five or six pounds, or something.

DW: Aye, we're going back.

CW: This little boy, he stood all night...

DW: He lived across the street.

CW: ...with his parents, his parents came out...

DW: His parents came out every hour or so. Somebody stood with him.

CW:...and he got it, he came in and he got it.

MM: Did he?

CW: So the papers took it on board, you see...

DW: So what we did, we gave him his ten shillings back.

MM: Oh, you never did?

CW: But we got the publicity in the paper.

DW: We got the publicity in the paper *[laughter]*.

MM: Ah wish ah was that wee laddie *[laughter]*.

CM: Ah think Alan Sugar should be here [*laughter*].

59m 19s.

DW: Oh the things we got up to, I mean every month, hardly a few weeks went by and we had a different competition for the kids. It was the one way to keep our name in the front and ye had to do it, especially when the multiples, your Argos and people like that, came in, you had to keep your name to the fore. And I mean people used to say 'I didnae see your photograph in the paper this week' Ah thought 'That's great', that's what we wanted, not that we wanted it, but for the business. The business, I think that's the only how we survived, giving the service because the girls were great and if somebody wanted something special we did try, like our gorilla, we did try to get it.

CW: I mean we also used to do other things likes of a window search, we'd get all the shops in the street to put something, a foreign...

DW: Object in their window.

CW: ...that brought the people, they came and looked round the shops.

MM: And you'd have to look into every shop.

DW: Every window.

CW: And you'd probably say 'Oh, I like that', that's what we did.

DW: No, you're no starting that one, no dinnae go on to civic pride.

CW: No, not that.

MM: Well, ah think we'll close the interview there, not because we've covered everything but that's long enough. And if it's ok with you, we'll come back and see you again.

DW: Yes, I enjoyed it.

MM: Because there's more to be told. So thank you very much but before ah switch the machine off, if there's anything else you'd like to say in conclusion?

DW: Just thank you for having us, I've thoroughly enjoyed reminiscing.

MM: You're welcome.

DW: Ah just feel ah could go on for ever now I've started. We brought the box of photographs out the other night. Oh!

1h 00m 08s.

MM: Well, maybe that's what we could do one day is, the next time we meet you, we could go through the photographs and we could record.

DW: There's some fantastic pictures.

MM: Aye, let's do that.

DW: And different things we've done and things that, och, just all sorts of different things, you know.

CW: I mean, there's a lot of people, they still like to see what happened twenty, thirty, forty years ago...

DW: We do.

CW: ...a lot of people in the general public do.

DW: Yes, and the general public.

CW: They like to, so we've got something in mind for that.

DW: I've got lots of things in mind.

MM: Ok, well thank you very much. I'm just going to switch the machine off.

End of interview.