

Interviewee: Robert McQuistan (RM)	Interviewer: Mark Mulhern (MM)
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**Key words: Recording equipment 01m 49s; Interview process 03m 35s; Choice of interviewee 04m 04s; Choice of topic 05m 29s; Use of interview material 07m 10s; Interview experience 08m 38s;**

MM: Now, Robert, for the recording, could you give me your full name please?

RM: Robert McQuistan.

MM: And your date of birth?

RM: 12/06/50.

MM: Which would make you how old just now?

RM: Well, that would make me sixty-two, Mark, if you're gonna push me on that.

MM: *[laughs]* Thank you. Now, where were you born, Robert?

RM: Technically, I was born actually along from here, in the village in Carsluith, so about, technically I was born about one and a half miles away.

MM: Right.

RM: Which was the midwife's house.

MM: Was it?

RM: Yes, so in fact, although we lived in Creetown, ma mother gave birth in the local midwife's place.

MM: Right, right.

RM: In the village.

MM: And where have you lived in your life, Robert?

RM: Well only here really, apart from university. I'm trying to think, the only time I've been away from the village would be four years at university, four or five years, whatever.

MM: Where was that?

RM: Edinburgh.

**01m 12s.**

MM: Edinburgh. Right, good. And your father, was he from round about here?

RM: He was Wigtown, brought up in Wigtown, so he moved not that far really I suppose, just across the bay and then settled here, settled in Creetown, got married here.

MM: Yes, and your mother, where was she from?

RM: Ma mother was Edinburgh.

MM: Edinburgh?

RM: Yea, our family have pulled girls from Edinburgh, ma brother's wife came from Edinburgh, my wife came from Edinburgh, my mother came from Edinburgh so we have stolen Edinburgh girl's basically.

MM: Well, you've made a fine choice [*laughs*].

RM: Oh, I think so.

**Recording equipment 01m 49s.**

MM: Now, the questions ah'm gonna ask you now Robert are fairly straightforward and just about the process. Firstly, how have you found the equipment to use?

RM: It's fine once you get used to it. It's fine, I'm always very nervous at have I taped, but when I see the red light permanently on I'm now much more comfortable and even to the point where one of them I didn't check. But I do check at the end of each recording, just the first few words.

MM: Good.

RM: I've had a couple of scary moments and I rushed home and phoned Alison and she said 'Have you checked the power's not a bit low?'

MM: Right.

RM: And that was the problem the power was low so I plugged it in.

MM: Good.

RM: But, no, fine, I can't argue, anything dilatoriness or any nervousness on my part has just been lack of familiarity.

**02m 34s.**

MM: Yes.

RM: But I'm much better with it now.

MM: Good, good. And how did you find the instructions on the forms and whatnot in the study pack? Was it fairly easy to understand?

RM: Aye, maybe a wee bit too much, if anything.

MM: I see, yes.

MM: I wonder whether it could be cut down a wee bitty [?].

MM: Yes, aye.

RM: And maybe the stuff, I gave out the two leaflets to, the leaflets for the information, background information.

MM: Yes.

RM: I think that could be really reduced...

MM: Right.

RM: ...punchier, bullet points.

MM: Single sheet perhaps?

RM: Easily, easily. I did one, you know, for the local [?] news and it just needs, almost an FAQs thing, you know.

MM: Yes.

RM: Make it terribly terse, not too wordy. I had another look at it the other day there and I thought 'Oh gee, that's heavy going' and I actually just marked the bit for my local folks that they were interested in, the recording bit.

MM: I see, yea.

RM: But I think it needs to, I think that could be done quite simply.

MM: Excellent.

RM: For a small fee I'll do it [*laughter*].

**03m 31s.**

MM: I'll maybe take you up on that.

RM: Yea.

**Interview process 03m 35s.**

MM: How have you found the process as regards the input from the co-ordinators, myself and Alison?

RM: Aye fine. No problems, it was good, no I liked that contact, I think that was very important.

MM: Uhuh.

RM: Alison was at the end of the phone, I gave her a call and she popped in here, actually, a month or so ago with the equipment, that was great.

MM: Good.

RM: She was nice, that is important.

MM: Yes.

RM: And [?] conversations, very important, it just keeps you touch the base.

MM: Yes, aye, aye.

RM: No, that's good.

**Choice of interviewee 04m 04s.**

MM: Now, this is maybe the most interesting question, in a way. How did you decide who to interview and then how did you decide what to ask them?

RM: I've got a lot of local connections and at first I probably made the mistake of thinking this had got just to be older folks that have got background experience, so ah went from people that I knew would be comfortable with me, so in a sense, it has to be, and ah wanted that sense of 'Oh, it's Robert, that's fine'.

MM: Yes.

RM: Even having said that, there is still that element of 'What's this gadgie here, what's this, what's all going on here, what are ye doing now?' So there's all of that wee hint of nervousness.

**04m 45s.**

MM: Yes.

RM: Maybe particularly with some older folks, too. So, but others, again I knew them well, I knew they'd be confident and there wasn't an issue with that. And something, an interesting story, something that they had which would reflect contemporary life, perhaps, in the case of the younger ones, or a life that was of the past but had changed in the last forty, fifty years. So people with something to say, people that were not nervous about saying it and people that were relaxed. Ok?

**Choice of topic 05m 29s.**

MM: And did you go with a list of questions or did you just take it as a conversation?

RM: I tend to go...

*Interview interrupted and restarted.*

MM: So, aye, you spoke to people who you knew would have something to say about life [?].

RM: Yep. But I did go in, maybe, with an idea myself where I was going with that.

MM: Yes.

RM: So, with the farming one, I knew what the story was going to be but ah didn't go in with a list of ten questions.

MM: Yes.

RM: Likewise with the other ones, ah just knew where their material was coming from but I just nudged the process and made it a conversation. You'll hear that, it's not question and answer. I mean, I'll throw in my interjections or my surprise or my, I think that works.

MM: Yes.

RM: I think that works.

MM: Yes.

RM: And just let the whole thing go and boy, it just goes, you really don't need to, you know, it's like one of these big grinding wheels, once it's going, or a flywheel, just touch it.

MM: The momentum, yes.

**07m 02s.**

RM: Give it a wee touch and zoom. It goes.

MM: Yes.

RM: That's the way I did it anyway.

#### **Use of interview material 07m 10s.**

MM: Good. And what do you hope happens to these recordings now that they've been made?

RM: Well, it would be nice if they were kept on record. Ah think there's a lot of material in there almost to analyse. I mean you guys are gonna listen to it and, you know, I think there's stuff in there that's gold dust to be honest. Ah think there's a real snapshot of past life and the people I was talking to were intelligent enough to see how the changes have impacted socially. They were quite aware of the bigger theme, you know, education wasn't accessible for a lot of these folks but now it is. And there is a kind of, it's not just 'I'm gonna tell you a story' it's 'I'm gonna tell you a story but ah can see, over the years, how society has changed, how community life has changed.' So there is quite a sensitivity in their part to the issues.

MM: Yes, yes.

RM: It wasn't just a flat level of 'Here's a wee story. Here's another story'. They themselves were able, maybe I nudged it to a certain degree, but they didn't take much nudging, they saw the big picture, if you get ma drift, and it's that big picture that's, I think, of interest.

MM: It is, yea. People are aware of their place in society, so yes, uhuh.

#### **Interview experience 08m 38s.**

What would you say you've learned from the experience so far, if anything?

RM: Oh, well, ah've learnt how intensely people feel about their own history, they, once they get into it and, one person says 'Oh ye know, it's taken me back and it's made me rethink and relive my past and stuff that ah'd forgotten about has come back.'

MM: Yes.

RM: So, in that personal sense, it's quite powerful for them but from my point of view just the flow of a person's life, just how it developed and evolved over the years. And the changes, just the remarkable changes from five to ten years, to twenty years, just how it all piles up.

#### **09m 38s.**

And riveting, because it's personal and factual and historical, sociological, cultural, linguistic. I loved the language, the language was great, it's quite fascinating just to even, even to talk about the language with some of them, they were really quite exercised by the Scot's tongue.

MM: Yes.

RM: All of that, it's like a rich tapestry, it's like a tartan rather than a plain cloth.

MM: Yes.

RM: And you just allow that to wash over you. That's my feelings.

MM: Yes.

MM: And I know that you're quite an active chap anyway but having conducted the interviews would you be interested or encouraged to participate any further in the study by, I don't know, carrying out transcriptions or writing, something...

RM: Yea, I'm more than happy to do that. The transcription bit, that, I don't know how time-consuming that would be because...

MM: It's very time-consuming.

RM: ...uhuh, that would be my gut feeling. But a lot of it won't need to be transcribed I would think. Although, mind you, talking, I mean Roma came up with two or three words that even I hadn't heard off.

MM: Really?

RM: Mm. I can't remember what they were now but, oh, taiglin was one, taiglin along the street and...

MM: Taiglin?

RM: Uhuh, I presume it just means wander or dander along the street. And there was another one she had there and she was, oh ah cannae remember what it was but she was good on a lot of words.

MM: Yes.

**11m 09s.**

RM: Just two or three words, you know, 'the rucks' for 'the haystacks' and so on. But by and large, they're discernible by any modern speaker of English or whatever, they would get the most of it.

MM: Yes.

RM: But there might be the odd word in there that maybe needs transliteration.

MM: Well, we're intending, as you know, I think I've mentioned it in the past, anyway, on our website to have the recordings accessfull. The thing is people would be able to hear and they're will be, I don't think we'll end up with full transcriptions because the people are gonna be listening they don't need that. What they might want is, you know, explanation of words.

RM: Uhuh, that's fine.

MM: And the rendering of Scot's language.

RM: It's not like the Doric, it's not as strong as that.

MM: No. '

RM: But it's still lovely to hear it an the accents there.

MM: Yes.

RM: The intonation's there.

MM: Yes.

RM: The vocabulary, to some extent, is there but not, it wouldn't stress any non-Scots people.

MM: No, no. Well, we've got, ah think, twelve field workers now who've completed some recordings and in that body of material there's quite a range of accents. So just on that level and an interest level, it's there [?].

RM: No, it's good, it's good to preserve that accent and one or two of the folk point me to other people, this is interesting, I hadn't mentioned-.

MM: Yes.

RM: At the end of an interview they'll say 'Oh, why not go and speak to-'.

MM: Yes.

**12m 41s.**

RM ...So I got Roma from Elizabeth.

MM: Really?

RM: Uhuh. 'Why not go and speak to, why not go-?' And in fact, she went and fixed it up for me.

MM: That's interesting.

RM: She fixed up the interview for me and then Roma has pointed me to somebody away up in New Galloway.

MM: Really?

RM: She says, oh yea, she says 'Boy, you think I'm broad, you go up there' and so I'm gonna follow that lead up.

MM: Yea.

RM: So ah haven't followed any of the leads up because I knew that the sort of thing was going back to you but, you know, the sky's the limit, in some ways.

MM: It is, isn't it?

RM: You begin to look around, you say 'Oh what about-, oh what about' you know.

MM: Yes.

RM: And then you draw a blank on occasions because I've got a friend here who'd be perfect for recording.

MM: Yes.

RM: 'Oh ah'm no doin that, no, no ah'm no daen that, no, no, no'.

MM: Ok. Well, where people like that, if they're a bit reticent, maybe once they see what happens to the recordings, you know, they might be, but no, some people just don't want to and that's ok.

RM: I know.

MM: So, they were all the formal questions I have Robert, but just before ah switch off the machine is there anything else you'd like to say about the process?

**13m 41s.**

RM: No.

MM: Of doing the fieldwork?

RM: No ah enjoyed it, I enjoyed it, I really did.

MM: Good.

RM: As long as you, if you can calm the folks down, not that they're, if you choose your people carefully that they it's got to be done. I mean some folks it's not a problem, I mean intervening a local councillor, fantastic, you know, no problems there but some other folks, you know, the older folks 'Oh what is it all about?' and 'What's this?' and 'Where's it going' and 'Who's doing this?', 'What am I signing this for?' So there's all that kinna bit you've got to, but of you chose your people carefully...

MM: Yes.

RM: ...that's fine and treat it as a conversation, treat it as a chat but you're not imposing yourself, you're letting it flow out.

MM: Yes.

RM: And I thoroughly enjoyed it, I must confess. No problems about it at all really.

MM: Excellent. Ok, that's great Robert, thanks very much. I'll switch the recorder off now.

**End of interview.**