

Interviewee: Sam Johnstone (SJ)	Interviewer: Caroline Milligan(CM); Mark Mulhern (MM) also present
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CM: So, I'm here with Sam Johnstone on the 6th February 2014 and the thing that we didn't say before the interview started, Sam, was that if you want to stop the interview at any time that's fine or if there's questions that you don't want to answer then that's also fine as well. And because this is the first time we've had a chance to shat that might happen. There's a few biographical questions that I'll ask you, first of all, that's so that we have that information for the survey as a whole so you've told me that you were born in Shetland, so could you tell me a wee bit about any other places that you've also lived?

SJ: I've stayed in England, ah joined the Air Force when ah was nineteen, ah've stayed in Bath, in Somerset, outside Bury St Edmunds, in Suffolk, stayed in London, Scarborough an also in Germany and Holland, wi the Air Force.

CM: So, was the Air Force, was that a long period of your life?

SJ: For five years.

CM: Five years. And did you do all these places, was that within that-?

SJ: Within that five years, yes.

CM: Yea, Gee wizz. Quite exciting. And so that was from when you were nineteen, when you left...

SJ: Nineteen.

CM: ...Shetland? Ok.

SJ: And before that ah was, in Shetland, when ah left school and joined the knitwear company, called [?] ah went down to Tillicoultry to learn how to do this, they call it intarsia, it's when they're machine knitting, an then went back to Shetland to work in a place called Yell, the island of Yell. Unfortunately, the company went bust and then ah worked back in Lerwick for nine months then after that ah joined the Air Force.

CM: Ok, and went on your travels.

SJ: Yea.

02m 15s.

CM: Then when you left the Air Force, what did you do then?

SJ: Ah went to Glasgow, become a policeman in Glasgow for nearly five years. Ah worked in Glasgow A Division, at that time in Turnbull Street, in the city centre, next to the, no far from the High Court in Glasgow. And they reorganised the shift pattern to the continental system so ah went across the hill tae Argyll Street, and ah stayed in, initially ah stayed in, initially ah

stayed in the Gorbals, in the Police accommodation in the Gorbals, in Glasgow. Then after that ah went tae Langside, Blythwood Avenue, ah stayed beside a landlady, then after that ah moved tae Bishopbriggs, bought a house in Bishopbriggs an then ah left the police force an went back to Shetland.

CM: And what did you do when you returned to Shetland?

SJ: I worked for the local authority, as a Pollution Control Officer. Ah did that for thirty-two years.

CM: And then was that when you-?

SJ: Ah got early retirement an ah stayed on in Shetland, because the wife was working as a Head Teacher in the town, in one of the local schools. And when ma wife retired, sadly, the wife's sister came up on holiday to us and she found out that she'd got dementia, so we kept her for about three months but we couldn't cope with her at all. So, we spoke to the wife's other sister in Liverpool and we put her into a home in Liverpool and that's one of the reasons we moved from Shetland. After we moved to Liverpool initially we went to our daughter's after we sold up the house and that for three months until we found somewhere to stay. We looked in England and Scotland and we decided where we are now was easy access and that.

CM: Was that, what was it that, you've said that the access to Liverpool was a factor.

SJ: Yes.

CM: What other things about this area were attractive to you?

SJ: Well, ah'd never actually been in Dumfries before, or Dumfries and Galloway itself, going by Gretna, we jist go down the old A74 and up off at Gretna and ah'd been tae Stranraer a couple o times and Port Patrick, but we did a reccie of the place an we liked the scenery, liked the area, but we looked in Cumbria before-hand and we didn't like what we saw so we came up here, had a look round here and looked in Dumfries and it wasnae too big a place, not a city life, more like a village life, in a sense, so we said we'd go for a house in Scotland and we got a house in [?] and we got the house we've got now.

05m 50s.

CM: Because ah did wonder, ah've never been to Shetland but ah wondered if the landscape had been a factor for you.

SJ: It's a different landscape, an Shetland hasnae got any trees at all and the house has a garden, ah've got trees in the garden which is...some of the trees are higher than the house. And they're very short of trees where we stayed wi the wind and everything, no much wind at all, an in Shetland ye were shuttin the windows every day, every night, more or less.

CM: And so you've been here, ah think, just under a year, is that right?

SJ: We left there in January last year, just over a year now.

CM: So you've settled quite well in here.

SJ: Settled quite good, mm.

CM: And how do you find the community here, you were saying where you are you've got about fourteen or fifteen sort of neighbours-ish?

SJ: Well, they were very friendly, as soon as we moved in, one of the neighbours came along and knocked on the door, gave us a bottle of wine and the other neighbour, nearest, they were on holiday, when they came back they came and knocked on the door and asked me into their house, or asked us into their house, and the wife was away at the time so ah went maself and they made me very welcome. And the people next door but one, the people come to the door and introduced themselves and who they were an that.

CM: Oh, good, is it quite a mixed community, we've quite a lot of folk that we've met down here have come into the area from outside and they make a really interesting part of the dynamic, if you like, of the region. Is that the case with where you are, are there people from all over?

SJ: Our next door neighbours, they came from Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Lanarkshire area, the immediate ones but the other couple, ah'm not sure where they're from originally but the nearest neighbours are from Lanarkshire, they've been there for thirty-odd years. And same with the other neighbours they were thirty-odd years but they came from somewhere else, not sure where they came from. And behind us, one of the neighbours, he's from the local area ah think, yes, his wife's from Ireland.

08m 11s.

CM: It's a good wee mix. Now I'll just have a wee look at ma notes if you don't mind. So we've covered quite a wee bit of what I had down. I was going to ask you about what are the things that you notice that are different here from Shetland in terms of, ah mean it could be to do with how the community works or it could be to do with language or, we were talking earlier about the flooding and you were telling me about how they don't seem to have the same priorities.

SJ: In Shetland, the roads in Shetland have ditches at either but here there's nothing, the water just runs off the road, they've no culverts at all spaced well along the roads.

CM: And you were speculating that just how they chose to spend, or prioritise what they're going to do.

SJ: It seems ok in the town but in the countryside, they've no drains, as such, along the side of the road. But ah maybe wrong [*Laughter*].

Language 09m 37s.

CM: Well, you're experiencing it on a day to day basis. What about, do you notice that there's quite a lot of peculiarities about the language or-?

SJ: Where we stay there's not a strong language at all, ah remember ah went to Police College wi a policeman from Dumfries and Galloway, he came from more the west side of the region and he had a peculiar, a very broad accent.

CM: So that could be to do with the geography, or it could be to do with the passage of time as well, I suppose.

SJ: I found up in Dunscore, a lot of the people are from England, a lot of people are from different parts of Britain, ah've come across quite a few English people in a small village, Dunscore. They're maybe, the local people they have a broad kinna accent, too, they have.

CM: But no particular words that you've come across that...

SJ: No, no.

CM: ...that you think.

10m 37s.

SJ: No, no the words, no, jist a...

CM: There's just more of an accent.

SJ: ...they way they actually [?] the words. You say the way they say Dunscore, they say it differently.

CM: So how would, so what are the different ways that they would say that?

SJ: Some people call it 'Dunscir' an I call it Dunscore and they say 'Ah'm from Dunscir' [laughter].

CM: So you've modified how you say it.

SJ: Aye.

CM: Good, good, good. What about where you are again, are there local shops or are there any community-?

SJ: The nearest shop is Hollywood, about five miles away, we've got Hollywood village and Dunscore itself is about two miles away, there's no a shop as such, there's a local doctors' surgery and pharmacist there and the local pub is part-time it's a community owned pub now. It's Thursday, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays but only at night time on Thursday and Friday nights.

CM: And is there much community activity there, is there?

SJ: The hall seems to be very busy, everything in the hall they have, but jist every so often they send oot flyers, every so often.

CM: And those are well attended?

SJ: We've never been there, the time I've been here I've never been able to go because ah've been down in Liverpool but they seems to be well attended.

CM: And you were saying you're quite near Moniaive.

SJ: Moniaive's about, ah cannae tell how Moniaive is, about Thornhill's not far either. Thornhill's where you go to the dentist. Thornhill's aboot ten, twelve miles, ah think, an Moniaive is same distance, you go [?] to Moniaive an same distance to Thornhill.

Transport 12m 48s.

CM: So it sounds like you probably have to have a car really. Is there public transport?

SJ: When we moved here initially, the bus only came on a Thursday only, and now we have a bus every day except a Sunday now.

CM: Jings, and that's over quite a short period of time.

SJ: Yes, so you get a bus into town, early in the morning, nine o'clock in the morning but the last bus is twenty-to-four, ten-to-four comin from town at night, so you could have a night in town.

CM: *[Laughs]* So you have to wait until the next morning to get back home. But that's pretty good, isn't it?

SJ: It's very important, the bus service.

CM: Is that because it's becoming, there's more people moving into the area or-?

SJ: There used to be a bus service thirty-four every day of the week and now, when we moved in a bus every day because one of the bridges was closed off, they were doing some repairs to the bridge across the Cairn Water and the bus came through [?] and when the local people came roond tae monitor, came roon wi a survey form asking if we'd use the bus if the bus came more often. And Frank put this to the bus company or the Council, the Community Council and they came up with the new timetable after they repaired the bridge. Ah think it started in May, a bus every day. Then after the bridge opened up the bus came through one day a week for a few weeks and then a bus every day.

CM: And then reinstated.

SJ: They'd put a questionnaire round the local people in [?] by the bus group and also the bus driver preferred coming through there too, ah think, a better road than going over the bridge and beside the water.

CM: Very good. So it benefits everyone in the community.

15m 02.

SJ: Ye can get, one, two, three, tree trips into the town, that's how many times you can go. We can leave the house at ten-to-twelve and be back in the house at ten to one. Get off the bus, do the shopping, catch the bus again *[Laughter]*. That's if you use Tesco's, if you don't use Tesco you need to go in...

CM: Kamikaze shopping, just scoot in and out again. It takes a bit longer if you go off to shop-

SJ: Yes, ten-to-ten bus and come oot at, back home ten-to-one or come home at twenty to five.

Garden 15m 46s.

CM: Good, that's great. Now, you've maybe answered this already, in ways, but what are the things you particularly like or, in fact, don't like about Dumfries and Galloway? Ah mean you've mentioned the landscape.

SJ: There's nothing really ah don't like about it as such. Ah findin that, in Shetland ah'm never used tae all this colours, in the gardens, are tremendous, all the different colours in the garden. In Shetland the season's very short, daffodils come up and ah've been lucky that daffodils have three or four weeks if ah'm lucky and a north wind blows them away or you get a frost and they're gone. But here the daffodils seem to be, they come up in March, in fact they're startin tae come up now and still there in May and in Shetland that never happened at all.

CM: Is that something you enjoy, do you enjoy gardening?

SJ: Ah enjoy gardening to a certain extent but ah don't go daft [*laughter*]. Ah enjoy it, the colours an that.

CM: Yes.

SJ: In our garden we've got all different blossoms, different months they come up, all the flowers, ah can't think o the names now.

CM: But you enjoy them, you enjoy the difference.

SJ: And all the different colours in the autumn, you never get in Shetland at all, all the different trees an that. In Shetland you've only got the colour of the heather, and also the rocks in Shetland change colour with lichen.

17s 32m

CM: Yea, the lichen ah suppose. Do you still quite miss Shetland or-?

SJ: Ah've been back, ah've been back three times since ah left.

CM: Ok, so-?

SJ: Ah've been back for a wedding and then we were back on holiday in June/July, July/August last year. Ah friend o mine had bought himself a boat down in Ipswich, asked me to give him a hand to sail it up to Shetland, so ah was staying up in Shetland last year. It took me aboot three weeks to do it.

CM: That was lovely.

SJ: Ah kinna miss the sailing down here, in Shetland ah was sailing as sport.

CM: Is that just something you haven't had time to explore down here, or is there not-?

SJ: Never had time to explore it as such either. People tell me there's a yacht club down on the coast there, on the Solway Firth, but ah've never had time to go down and have a look. This past year we've been up and down to Liverpool a lot.

CM: Yea, but that might be something that you'll...

SJ: Look at, yea.

CM: ...pursue.

Music 18m 41s.

Great, now this is maybe a silly question but because, ah think ah maybe said to you that, you know, at the university we've got a big collection of music from, I think specifically, Yell, on Shetland but certainly a lot of fiddle music an ah was wondering if there was anything that you could say about, you know, if you're aware of here of the music here or if it sort of seems to play a role in the culture down here in the same way as it does in Shetland or perhaps it doesn't in Shetland?

SJ: No, it seems to, ah've been listenin to the radio and the Robbie Shepherd program sometimes, an he speaks about this area a lot, Thornhill, about the different music venues in Thornhill, he does, and also ah noticed last year a lot of, in the shops in Thornhill, a lot of notices of different music, a kind of, ah think it's a music festival in Thornhill, there seem to be a lot in the area. Also ah noticed on the waterfront the Coach and Horses, down in the Whitesands there, different types of music playing on certain days an that. One of my neighbours, he goes and plays in the Coach and Horses the last Thursday of the month.

20m 17s.

CM: Ok.

SJ: They play traditional music.

CM: Ah think it's something we'll have to try look at a wee bit more closely because I think I had expected quite a lot of information about the music here to come out and it hasn't really.

SJ: I've not been involved in the music scene here, at all, but ah've seen it advertised a lot.

CM: Yes, it seems it's happening, we're just not finding out about it yet.

SJ: There seems to be Scottish music too and that's on the notices in some of the shops.

CM: We'll have to look into that. I've kind of got to the end of what I had written down. Let me have a wee look. Did you have, was there anything that you were thinking about before you came along today? Ah mean there's lots of different things that you've mentioned that we could maybe look at in another interview but is there anything that you were that you were thinking about before you came today?

SJ: Well there's, there seems to be a lot of choirs around here. We went to a concert in the local church after New Year, the Saturday after New Year. There were a lot of choirs doing different things, the Cairn Valley Choir, more of a jolly choir rather than a serious choir.

CM: Uh huh.

SJ: They were very good they were, there seemed to be people from all different areas.

CM: Must have a wee look into that, because we've not heard anything about the choirs down here so maybe there's-.

SJ: There's a lot o choirs, seems a lot o choirs.

CM: Mark's the listening ears on this interview so he's going to pick up on the things that I've missed out on?

Dumfriesshire identity 22m 17s.

MM: Just a couple of things, as a man who's lived most of his life in Shetland but also elsewhere in the UK and abroad, ah was wondering if you picked up if there's a sense of Dumfriesshire identity and does it feel like its own place to you?

SJ: There seems to be a lot of people from other places in the area, you go in the shops and people are, they're not Scottish, there are a lot of English people in Dumfries, or in this area, the Irish so the number, ah've never heard anybody saying as a kina national identity as such, it's kinda unusual.

MM: And this is maybe related to, and maybe a trivial question but you've been here for about a year now, where's home to you? Is it Shetland or is it here?

SJ: Ah think, ma wife, we feel as we've been here for years, we have. We sat one night and said that six months ago.

MM: Right.

SJ: The people in my area have made us feel very welcome.

MM: Right.

SJ: And in fact one o oor neighbours, ah think she's from England somewhere and you wouldn't know she's from England at all.

MM: Right, that's interesting. That's all ah picked up.

CM: Have you enjoyed it, it's not been too traumatic?

SJ: No.

CM: And were you quite sad that you weren't able to put your knitwear training, you know, that you weren't able to follow that through after doing the training?

SJ: Ah enjoyed it but ah done a, ah might have done if ah was still living in Shetland. Leaving Shetland has given me a different aspect on life completely. Ah know people ah went to school with and have never been out of Shetland, for years in the same job, an they get very insular, an different views, ah couldn't believe how, I don't know what ye'd call it, the discrimination, in a sense, ah couldn't believe it.

Glasgow 24m 43s.

CM: And I imagine your time as a policeman in Glasgow, jings, that must have-.

SJ: That was typical [?] ah joyed it. The only reason ah left, on ma placement there were thirty-four of us on the shift and only fourteen were left out of that, a lot of people, a lot of National Service people were doing their time and leaving and Glasgow went through a bad time. Ye normally got paid on a Thursday and ah got paid on the following Tuesday, there wasn't enough money in the coffers to pay the wages. Jist the time o the end o the Poll Tax, the Council Tax, and [?] o us and we had to wait [*laughter*]. That only happened once.

CM: We'll come back and interview you when we're doing Glasgow.

SJ: They made us wait, that's only happened once.

CM: Yea, we'll come back and interview you when we're doing Glasgow [*laughs*].

SJ: But they cleaned up their act, when ah trained initially it was just the changeover of Strathclyde and the City of Glasgow, ah got a raincoat, a second-hand raincoat, it came folded and ah had that for a year, before ah got a new raincoat, an the Inspector he brought me up and he says, [?] my raincoat how bad it was, my new raincoat. But were busy twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, that's the reason that ah left it.

MM: Yes.

SJ: I enjoyed it, the best job I did but you couldn't go on because, initially, when ah started ah did twelve weeks night shift, Glasgow was unique from the rest of Scotland, Glasgow had their own trainin school because they had a consolidation order, Glasgow had a consolidation order. An ye learned that, ye went there, ye went to the training school for two weeks then they put ye on, assigned ye on a station on the beat an ye were there for three months an then ye went tae Tulliallan and back from there an ye went back to local training school in your probationary period. This consolidation order, they done away with that, in the early eighties.

MM: Is that because of Strathclyde?

SJ: No, Strathclyde still had it, yea. But they done away with it in the eighties an gave every region had the same powers.

MM: Right.

SJ: In Glasgow they had different powers, they did. We went tae Tulliallan, they took us from all parts of Scotland and the people from outside Glasgow didn't like the Glasgow police. They called it the Glasgow [breach?] they called that, they could do ye for Breach of the Peace and that covered anything in Glasgow, it covered until you got more evidence.

28m 04s.

MM: So you had a lot of power.

SJ: Yes. An you could stop and search anybody at any time o the day. You saw a person carrying a holdall at two o'clock in the morning, you stopped them. In Edinburgh, you couldn't do that in Edinburgh...

MM: Right, right.

SJ: ...unless they had committed a crime before and you saw them coming from the place.

MM: Yes, uh huh.

SJ: And all the different quirky things like the height o [?] shop windows, they had to be a certain height.

MM: Oh, how so?

SJ: For safety. And they were [?] law, they were complaining about the shopkeeper aboot[?] but the fines hadn't been increased at all, still back in the nineteen hundreds. [?].

MM: Oh really.

SJ: Fifty pence ah think.

MM: Yea, yea.

SJ: We had thigither, other things like ice-cream vans, more powers over ice-cream vans than anyone else did and also taxis. We inspected taxis and the cinemas.

MM: Right.

SJ: In the centre of an operation you came up in the cinema in that time o day and check the fire doors and the licensing laws.

MM: And has that changed?

SJ: Ah'm not sure if it changed but in some parts it's only the Fire Service that could do that.

MM: Aye, right.

29m 59s.

SJ: The fire inspection was done annually. They put all the locks on the inside doors, if it happened at night time in Glasgow, people breaking into the premises?

MM: [?]

CM: Is that ok, are you happy?

MM; Anything else you want to say before we finish off?

CM: No, nothing at all.

MM: That's great. Thank you very much.

CM: Thank you, that was great fun. Ah've not used that machine before.

End of interview.