

Interviewee: Bob MacDonald (BM)	Interviewer: Caroline Milligan(CM); Mark Mulhern (MM) also present
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Key Words: Burns House 00m 30s; Wash-houses 11m 05s; The Siller Gun 17m 21s; Army Service 25m 14s; Local Murder 28m 07s.

CM: So you've brought along some photographs.

BM: Yes, these are the old photographs o Dumfries, fae away back, ah don't know where that is, fae about Annan, ah'm sure.

CM: Ah'll just say for the recording that it's the 7th of February, 2014, and I'm here with Mr, is it Bob or Robert you prefer?

RM: Bob.

CM: Bob, Bob McDonald and interviewer Caroline Milligan and we're just looking at some photos that you've brought along with you.

Burns House 00m 30s.

BM: These are fairly old, that is a unique one, there is plenty o these photos about but that was the industrial school, right next to Burns' house. Ma father was a curator o Burns' house. That's the bed that Burns died in, by the way.

CM: Oh.

BM: No that one up there, that one there.

CM: Yes.

BM: And it was an industrial school that, at one time, kinna boys, before they had boys', and it was used as a Model Lodging House when we were there, an then at the time of Dunkirk they brought the troops back tae Dumfries, an they put them in there, there was nowhere else to go, you know, the evacuation of Dunkirk, so the troops were in there an eventually they pulled the whole thing down in Dumfries and what is in there Heather, in Burns' Street, next tae the Burns hoose is a kinna handicapped thing?

HM: Ah think it is a handicapped centre, uh huh.

01m 25s.

CM: Ok, when you said a Model Lodging House, what do you mean by that?

BM: A Lodging House [laughs].

CM: Ok.

HM: For down and outs.

CM: It's just, that was just, ok I see.

HM: Down and outs wasn't it?

MM: Aye.

HM: The down and outs?

BM: No really.

HM: Was it no?

BM: People that couldnae get accommodation anywhere else, some of them were tramps an in one case ah remember, ah was very young, ah was living across the road here an Pagan, the undertaker, come up at this end where the entrance was, wi a huge, a big widden box and him an two policemen went intae the, an ah came oot tae the, ma father come tae the door an says 'What's gaun on there?' He says 'Somebody's died' some tramp had died during the night that's the box tae take him away in the box. They were kinna rough in these days, weren't they, unmarked grave, ye know.

CM: What age were you then, what age were you?

Burns' house 02m 20s.

BM: Ah was let me think noo, ah was thirteen, ah was seven-year-old when ah went opposite the Burns' house an we stayed there for three years, actually in the house, and we moved across the road to the curator's house an they had it done up that for us, electric light an all the luxuries. Ah often wonder how Burns existed by the way. So that was the living-room, the kitchen, maybe you'll know about that house by the way. Have you been in it?

CM: No, I haven't been in it, no, no.

02m 51s.

BM: When ma father had it, what we done was, that was the Burns' study, that was his study, a mended a puncture on ma bike in there and ma mother objected tae it, this was the kitchen down here and she objected to me sorting a puncture, so ah sorted a puncture where Burns wrote Auld Lang Syne [laughter] probably unique. But that was the room he died in.

CM: So, sorry, when you lived here, where was the Museum part of the-?

BM: Only one room, that's, they say, the room he died in, they say he died in.

CM: Yea.

BM: That was the study. But when Burns died in this room James, biographer, he says it would be ridiculous to think that Burns had shared a room with his wife, she was pregnant, she had the wean on actually the day o the burial. So, a dying man could not share a room wi a pregnant woman, so they shifted him to here, the one we were in.

CM: In the one, yea, so the museum itself, that was confined to one bit...

BM: Just the one room.

CM: ...and then family lived in the rest of the house, yea.

BM: That's right. An that was the best room downstairs, it was considered the best room.

CM: Oh, to the left of the front door, yea. And would you just use that, was it just for visitors or...

BM: No.

CM: ...do you mean when you say the best room.

BM: Nobody was allowed in, ah remember one, we were aw sitting having a meal one day and this character fae Yorkshire comin in wi his, carrying his children an that, 'Is this Bobby Burns' house?' we were sittin eating a meal, he must have thought this was an enactment. Ma father says 'No, it's upstairs', so he took him upstairs, it was sixpence tae get intae the house, intae the room he died in, an tickets, the usual carry-on. But we lived in the rest o the house, ma mother and father lived downstairs and we stayed downstairs.

CM: So how many brothers and sisters were in the one room?

BM: Well, there was only maself an ma brother an ma elder sister, there was a wee room off that.

04m 59s.

CM: Ok.

BM: Where Jessie Lewars attended Burns, jist a wee, wee room, attended Burns, they were neighbours an she helped in the Burns family when Burns was really ill, so she come across the road and she helped here, but it's just a wee, wee room, just off the main room, silly wee room, ye can put a bed in it, that's aw, it was interesting.

CM: Very good. And what was special about the best room, then?

BM: Actually, Burns, his family, Robert Burns, young brother, and William Nicol said that when they had guests in the house, when Burns had guests in the house that was the best room they used, it was kept for the best room.

CM: And then, so when your family lived there, did they use-.

BM: Ma mother and father lived in that.

CM: That's where they were.

BM: That was the accommodation for them, aye.

CM: OK, that's grand. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about the interior of the house, you know, how the kitchen was or, you were saying that when you moved you got electric lights and-.

BM: There's a girl from Moffa, she reacted Jean Armour, ah don't know if, she's an actor.

CM: Oh ah've heard of Jean Armour.

BM: Well this girl fae Moffat was an actress in Edinburgh, by the way, she dressed up as Jean Armour, an she was sittin there, so we got invited in, an ah went in first, she's sittin 'Good morning, I am Mrs Armour, an Armour's my own name' and she blethered away quite the thing. An the first thing ah said tae her was 'When did they alter the floor in here?', ah said 'ma mother could never open this oven door,' which ma mother used, by the way, ah says, 'What stick?' an she's sittin lookin at me and she says 'An when did they alter the floor, it used tae be a wooden floor in here?' An she must have thought 'Oh here we've got a [?] here [*laughter*]. Ah' said 'Ah'd better explain, we lived in here', so ah explained to her then. But she was awfy, awfy good about it an ah did explain about sleepin upstairs, about Burns not dying in there, she said 'You're quite correct, how could a dying man share a bed wi a pregnant woman', that was interesting that. That whole, ah wish ah had a photy o that one, it was done in Victorian times, the Victorians were quite keen on makin every, that's a wee thatched roof place, the Victorians were very, very keen on concrete and they concreted all the house, the whole front. So, it took two old stonemasons about a year and a half to chip, chip, chip away there and take it the whole to what it wis originally.

07m 34s.

CM: Uh huh, so it must have been quite curious to live in a museum as a child.

BM: Oh aye, it was really, ma first episode was ah looked fae there away right across, there was a big glass case, oh about the width o this place here, an ah was lying, an the first night we moved in and it was shakedown, by the way, because ye didnae [?] removal there an ma brother an I were were lyin on a sheet and aw we could see was a cast o Burns' skull in this great big glass case [*laughter*], oh panic stations.

CM: And did the family, did you have to have a sort of certain routine to work around the times when this room was open? You know, did you have to have your meals at certain times or whatever or did you just see visitors now and then?

BM: Oh aye, we had hours made up, we had a wee [?], ah think we were open fae about nine in the morning, during the season, in the winter it was closed. An we had, in that room there, Harry Lauder came during the War, tae the Lyceum Theatre, he done a speech but he wanted to see the house, but ma father, it was shut then, during the winter, so ma father took him up and there was this wee man stanin, smokin a pipe an he says tae me, he says, he says tae ma father 'Can ye gie me a relic, something that was here' so ma father sent me up to the attic where the original boarding was, so ah got a wee bit o a plaque, an ah took it an gave it to Harry Lauder an he wrapped it in a bit o paper, an 'Thanks very much, son' and he gave me half a crown which was a lot of money.

CM: Yea.

BM: That was Harry Lauder in these days and there was a lot o old characters there tae visit the house but during, if ma father thought it was an obligation he opened it during the winter if it was somebody important, you know.

CM: Mm.

BM: An that was it.

HM: He had two jobs didn't he, he worked in the Lyceum as well, he was the manager o the Lyceum?

BM: The Regal.

HM: In the Regal, the Regal.

09m 35s.

CM: Oh right.

BM: Aye. The wage was a pound a week, an free rent in the house, four years later we moved across the road an it was a pound a week pay, which ma father, he worked at two jobs, actually, he was a welder tae trade, but he worked at the Regal at nights an then he was promoted tae manager and that was a wee bit more financially better. Ma mother never worked, which they didnae in these days an, otherwise we managed aw right. Ma father started selling souvenirs fae Wylie and Lockhead, fae Glasgow, an they got in touch wi him an they sent doon some Burns' souvenirs, books and various wee things and during the season quite a lot of them got sold, wee miniatures of Burns' house done in china, God knows how many are left now, an they were selt, twelve an six or something in the old days, you couldnae get them now, ye couldnae buy, by the way opposite-.

CM: Did you work in the shop; did you help out in the shop?

BM: Me?

CM: Yea.

BM: Ah was a kinna nuisance actually [*laughter*]. Ah wis better oot the road, mam other handled that side. But opposite o here was the town destructor, aw the rubbish in the toon was brought to the destructor here, right opposite the house, and they burnt this, ah can explain it better wi this, now where is it, ah made a list.

CM: Oh, you've got a wee list.

BM: Aye, that's it.

Wash-houses 11m 05s.

BM: Aw the rubbish in the town, horse and cart by the way, an big tip intae this place an they burnt aw these furnaces up, an they started a wash-house further doon here, for the people. Well, interesting or no, they had two wash-houses in Dumfries one on the Greensands, which is near the Nith, an they had the scrubbing boards in these days, us boys used to think it was great going doon there, humphing them an a wash-house. An then they had a drying green attached tae the wash-house, in the Greensands, near the Nith, well this one, the women used tae wash wi the scrubbin board, hang their washins oot an dry there. But they built the big one just roon the corner there in Dumfries, well, there werenae facilites for a dryin green, no in the town, built up area, so what they done, wi the heat from here, they normally run their wash-hoose from there, but they put great big dryers in, oh the size o this, big drawer dryers, an the women hang their washin and they charged them tuppence or thruppence a time because ye had no facilities for hanging clothes out, an then on top o that, how ah know all about this, by the way, the one on the Greensands, ma uncle and ma aunt, he done aw the fittin work, he was an engineers, he done aw the fittin work in the wash-hoose, they had baths, no swimmin baths, there's no facilities in the toon, there's jist gas-lit hooses an tae get a bath, very few people had bathrooms so they charged them one-and-six for the best bath, an even though a big bath, oh, a huge bath, and one-and-six, an a shilling for the peasants, for the plebs, a shillin, and they went in there and ye got a bath.

12m 54s.

CM: So that was part of the, part of the wash-house, was the what were they like, cubicles or little rooms with baths in them?

BM: They were like wee cubicles really, aye, big, oh, huge baths, ma Uncle Lawrie, he maintained aw the hot-.

CM: What was the thing about the best bath that made it so-?

BM: Ah don't know [*Laughs*]. It was maybe bigger.

CM: Bigger or hotter [*laughter*].

BM: Or maybe they had covering on the floor or something, ah don't know. Ah couldnae really tell ye but the plebs done wi a, in fact some of them used tae bring their two or three weans anbring them aw in a oner. Because even in these days ye had tae try an keep a cleanliness, ye know, an they were jist wee gas-lit hooses, rows and rows o gas-li hooses wi ootside toilets. They done their best in these days wi what they had.

CM: That's fascinating, ah hadn't, so they were both quite large buildings, the wash-houses, so that they could accommodate-.

BM: I'll show yea, this was a school at one time and they were knocked intae wash-houses and unbelievable, when they started bringing automatic washin machines in, aw the people that there, why ah don't know, an they objected tae the washin machines, they were quite happy wi their scrubbin boards, so ma Uncle Laurie an Meg, they aw had a big meeting in the town, somewher in the

town and they explained to them that the automatic washin machines were coming whether they liked it or no, so that was it.

CM: Can you explain to me about the, how, you were saying there was the destructor where they burned everything.

14m 26s.

BM: The town dump.

CM: An then that provided the hot water...

BM: Correct.

CM: ...for the wash-houses and then you were saying about the, ah can't quite picture the drying area...

BM: Oh aye.

CM: ...how did that work?

BM: Ah'll tell ye how the done it, it was cleverly done, they were like the height o this, almost identical to this and they were, inside it was like bars, all the way down, metal plating all the way down, it was like a big huge drawer ye pulled out an there were the facilities to hang aw the clothes up, ye shoved it back in again an it was a huge hot-house, so the women turned oot well. Ah mean if ye think back in these days, nineteen-thirties, they done what they could, wi the money available an-.

HM: So that destructor, is that where they destroyed the dogs as well?

BM: Aye, that was sad, that. the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), on a Saturday morning, any dogs which had to be put doon, the method of puttin them doon, by the way, was primitive, they used what they killed a sheep, a spike, an as boys, boys are boys an dinnae care what ye say, so we aw used tae gaun doon tae the destructor on a Saturday morning an watched carefully, an it was doon below there were a pit at the back o the entrance and the RSPCA officers come along and one o the last ones that ah seen was a Labrador and they tied it to a rone pipe an somebody says to them 'Away an get rid o her', and there's a gun, [*shooting noise*] and of course they just put the bodies of the dogs into the big furnace, the two big furnaces, that was the method of killing in these days. Speaking for masell, ah had two wee dogs and had them put down, an injection now but in these days it's primitive.

CM: Was the, the furnaces, were they enclosed at all or were they-?

BM: Totally enclosed.

CM: Yea.

BM: The heat was quite terrific.

CM: Yea.

16m 22s.

BM: There was an old character there, Willie, mentally he was a wee bit backward but he got the job, he had a big auld fashioned pram, used tae, an people got their clothes dried, he used to wheel it up, it's wis aw hills in these days, up to their home for them, tuppence a time. Oh dear, when ye think back, but it was aw horse-drawn in these days, the destructor. They collected aw the stuff, the rubbish fae the town, fae bins an that an they reversed these huge Clydesdales into this chute, it was

fascinating tae watch, by the way, an tipped the cart up an that was it, an the Clydesdale come back oot.

CM: And was that a continuous, did that go on, you know, Monday to Friday.

BM: Mondays tae Friday, Saturday morning was a good morning cause they collected aw the fruit and various things fae the big fruit places, an as boys we used to love this, huge big bananas an aw the rest o it, before the War. An when the War broke oot, of course that stopped.

The Siller Gun 17m 21s.

That was one, oh that was the Siller Gun. Now they dinnae shoot for that now, Marilyn's, they used to go oot tae the Lochar Moss, ah had a foot in the Army ah'd go there maself, an ye fired fae aboot three hundred yards, at a range in the Lochar Moss. And ye didnae get any money for it, but Marilyn's father, ma father-in-law, he won it twice, he run the Army Cadets an Dumfries Voluntary, in fact he got the award, what for?

HM: The British Empire Medal.

BM: Aye, the British Empire Medal, for that, a quiet auld man but an excellent shot, fae the First World War, he won it twice.

CM: Wow.

BM: The Siller Gun.

CM: And there would be a lot of prestige, was there, if you won that, yea?

BM: Very quiet auld man, wasn't he?

HM: Aye.

BM: The unfortunate thing aboot the Siller Gun, it was done on the Lochar Moss, outside Dumfries.

HM: Out the Georgetown Road.

BM: Out the Georgetown Road.

18m 22s.

HM: At the end there.

BM: Right on the Lochar Moss and it was done away wi and it was the fault o a priest from St Andrew's. For some reason he took the boys for a walk, which was a private school in those days, he took them by and the flags were up, aw ranges in the Army the flags up, red flags, keep clear, so some shooting was going on, ah don't think there was any danger, but that was it cancelled forever more, a shame, the Siller Gun was done away wi. The Siller Gun dates away, way back to the seventeenth century.

CM: Ah had a wee read about it because ah knew you, when you came into the shop, you'd got the, mitu's sad that it's no longer passed on.

BM: They done it a wee, wee bit at an [?] range up the Edinburgh road but it was never the same. That'll be one of the most unusual ones from the Dumfries area.

CM: So this is, Mousewald, Moosewald?

BM: Moosald, aye.

CM: What did you say?

HM: Moosald.

BM: Moosald. Thatched cottages ah don't know whether ah've got that. It's a pity [?].

CM: It's amazing isn't it? I was going to ask you about the Siller Gun. So did you go along to those celebrations when you were a young man or when you were-?

BM: The High Street was packed, an you'll see, the High Street was really packed wi them, but it was quite a celebration, mainly they were up on the mid-steeple an he made a wee speech, pair auld Tam made a speech thanking them very much but the High Street was completely packed in the old days an, aye, it was interestin.

HM: It was done at the same time as the Guid Neighbours celebrations.

CM: Ok, so there was-.

BM: Aye done at the same time as that so ye had a big crowd there already. It was always during the good weather. These were aw boys he trained, in the Cadets, so they chaired him up and most of these boys went to the Army, by the way. They were aw trained cadets.

CM: What year was that?

20m 26s.

HM: The KOSBs [King's Own Scottish Borderers].

BM: The KOSBs, Heather, 1950s?

HM: Aye, because ah would only be, aye, yes.

CM: So, do you remember that as well, going to that?

HM: Ah can remember that, ah ca remember going to Edinburgh Castle, was it Edinburgh or Holyrood?

BM: Up tae Edinburgh.

HM: For his presentation, ah went wi ma Granny and Grandpa.

BM: Ah dunno who presented it, was it?

HM: Och, ah don't know, ah think, was it, it wasnae William Turner, was it?

BM: Naw, it was somebody higher up.

HM: Aye ah think it was somebody higher up.

BM: Aye, William Turner wis the Lord Lieutenant o the county, he died in your car park by the way.

HM: Aye, he came to shop and went out-.

BM: He was a Brigadier during the War.

HM: Aye, and passed away.

MM: How did he die?

HM: Ah think it was just a stroke, aye, aye.

MM: I was going to say Mr MacDonald, would you mind if I photograph your cards.

BM: No, no.

CM: So, these are the ones that we've mostly been talking about.

MM: Aye.

CM: These three here and this one.

MM: Thank you.

21m 28s.

BM: Ah never forgot Willie Turner at your place, mind Billy? Ah came oot wi an auld Ford Escort and Sir William come oot o his shop and wee Billy, 'Ah see ye've still got the old car, Sir William?' Always addressed him as Sir William, 'Let me tell you' he says, 'a car is a metal conveyance which conveys one from point A to point B, that is their use' [*laughter*]. Oh, he was very military. His son, his son's well his [?] still there yet.

HM: Aye, he's still up at Mill Head.

BM: If anything at aw, he's no as fit as he used to be.

HM: Oh no, he's really quite lame.

BM: Very military. Ah thought ah had a very good answer for Sir William, but, ah'll no say he was abrupt it was just the military was of speaking.

CM: What time do we need to finish up?

MM: We don't have much time unfortunately.

CM: Because ah was wondering if we maybe-.

MM: Another fve minutes or so?

CM: Yea, is there anything else you would like to talk about?

BM: Like Dumfries itself?

CM: Yea, or of your own life or, you know-.

MM: Just to bear in mind that we can do another interview [?] another day.

BM: Oh aye, aye. ah was born in 1924, 5th November 1924, ma mother says it was a Tuesday night and it was leshin wi rain.

HM: Yes, it's unbelievable, he'll be ninety in November.

BM: Aye, yes, uh huh.

HM: And his brother's ninety-two in October.

MM: Gee wizz.

BM: Aye.

HM: And yer sister's ninety-four, in September.

BM: Elsie's ninety-four, very mentally alert.

23m 20s.

CM: Oh fantastic. Are you all, have you all been in Dumfries your whole lives or-?

BM: Well, ah wis in the Army for four year. Ma brother, brother Bill, he was in Hong Kong, a civil engineer, Hong Kong, for thirty-three year, and he lives in a nice part o the town.

HM: Essex Park.

BM: Essex Park.

HM: Aye.

BM: He developed a wee bit o a colonial attitude [*laughter*] when he came back.

BM: He did, definitely, aye. He was surrounded by Chinese servants, you know. So, his wife didnae keep very well at all, she was a Sister, da Nursing Sister, she went tae Hong Kong. They had a family in Hong Kong tae and the boy, Sandy, he studied law and, but the qualification he got was not suitable in Britain so he's in Africa somewhere, ah don't know where. That was a great view, Caerlaverock Castle, a really good one.

CM: It's lovely, yes.

BM: It just shows you, it'll be written on the back that many times. It actually belonged to the Maxwell family at one time and the original castle's over here somewhere, a wooden one which wisnae, wouldnae stand up tae it. How they built that ah don't know where they got the foonds for it, you know what I mean.

CM: Uh huh.

BM: An it was surrounded by moat, ah was doon there one day, many years ago and ah knew the fellie that was the kinna curator an ah mentioned to him aboot the moat. He said 'We dredge it every now and again and occasionally we come up wi shields, swords, bits o body [*laughter*], shootin above the ramparts, jist landed in the moat, they just left the bodies lying, that was the method, it wisnae worth fishin the oot.

Army Service 25m 14s.

CM: Where did you go when you were with the Army, where did you go when you were with the Army?

BM: Oh various, ah done aw ma, ah was in the Parachute Regiment an ah got landed for various places an did land, ah moaned ma heid, non the Isle of Wight and ah moaned an moaned aw the time an a wee fella ah palled up wi, he was in the SAS [Special Air Service], he said 'Ah'll fix ye a postin.' Ah said 'Where are we going' he said we're going for experimental jumping to Beaulieu in Hampshire, ah've arranged it. That's where we went, we done twenty-one jumps.

25m 52s.

CM: What did you not like about the Isle of Wight?

BM: It was a beautiful place but it was snobbish, quite a bit snobbish, there was one woman there and she worked in a wee church hall at the bottom o the, near the barracks and originally she came fae Scotland an she say's the Black Watch would come down there, they were stationed during the War an they didnae make a very good name for themselves. Inclined to be a wee bit snobbish there but we got on aw right, we were right next to Parkhurst Jail, and not a word of a lie, the Parkhurst Jail was a far more homely than Newbury Barracks, oors were grim, but the jail was beautiful, aw the gardens laid oot an everything, ye know. One o them escaped, a fella called Jackson in 1946, he escaped fae Parkhurst Jail and there were search parties everywhere lookin for him, he was on the Isle somewhere, ah don't know where he was an the CO [Commanding Officer] decided then to call the Army oot. There were 800 o us, so their idea was, because this fella had seen people comin so he hid everywhere, it was fu o wee lanes and so the funny thing was a Corporal come fae Glasgow, an a Private, they were brownd off lookin in aw the places, lookin doon this quarry an they seen this figure bending over a fire, trying tae roast a bit o rabbit over the fire, so they went doon an the Corporal said tae him 'Would ye no want tae come back wi us', he says 'Ye cannae carry on like this', he's sprained his ankle, he fell off a [?].

CM: Oh jings.

BM: He sprained his ankle. He said 'Ye'd be better comin back wi us' so they brought him back to the road, brought him back to the police station. An ah wis, ah wis comin on leave an ah got on the boat, ah was headin for Southhampton, an he was on the boat wi two detectives, handcuffed. He got three years extra for escapin fae Parkhurst. A wee, wee boke but the papers headed it up 'Ace Commando hunted by Parachute Regiment' [*laughter*]. He was in the Commandos during the War, that wee fella.

Local Murder 28m 07s.

HM: You worked wi that man that killed the policeman, didn't ye, he was an electrician?

BM: Oh, aye. Bob, aye, Bob.

HM: Dad was an electrician at the ICI [Imperial Chemical Industries], an he worked wi, who was it? What was his name again?

BM: Bob Smith.

28m 21s.

HM: Bob Smith.

MM: Oh yea.

BM: He actually, Bob an I worked thigither in the boiler station there was another [?], a fellie a served ma time wi, when they built the ICI in the boiler station an a fellie called Bob Wallace, another electrician, we were sittin bletherin away an as the argument was gaun on, an Bob Smith came in 'Bob' ah says, 'Settle the argument'. 'What is it?', how many volts do you use in an electric chair?' He says 'Eleven thousand', so Bob Wallace says 'Nothing o the kind, five thousand'. So anyway, that was the argument. Two weeks later wee Tommy Conway, the foreman, asked me 'Bob' he says 'can you dae me a favour? Collect Bob Smith's clothes will ye?' this was on a Monday mornin, he says 'He a bit trouble on the Saturday night'. An ah says 'Is he comin back?' He says 'Ah don't think sae, but somebody's comin tae collect his clothes.' So, somebody come in to the factory an took his clothes away so when ah got back that night an ah saw the Evening Times, Local man, Policeman, Sergeant Gibson, was shot by Bob Smith. An how it happened doon Bank Street, Bob stood wi a big double-barrelled gun, the police car come doon quietly and [*shooting sound*] an he shot him, Sergeant Gibson was a very popular Sergeant got shot in the head and the chap ah worked wi, he was in for a rupture operation, told me later on, they brought Bob Smith in, Bob Gibson, Sergeant Gibson, half his head was blown off, he died. So, anyway Bob was apprehended, Bob Smith, an they took him up for trial and they put a petition roond Dumfries trying tae save him, it went roond the canteen an aw the rest o it, some o them signed it and some didna, but he got hanged at [?], an his father was a joiner, ah didnae ken that, it finished the father. He went up the night before an in these days the local administration had tae go up, ah'm trying tae mind whae he wis, he had one leg anyway, he was [?] he'd to go up the night before an he had tae witness the hanging too. He said it wisnae very pleasant at aw.

HM: So why did he do it?

BM: He was drunk. Ah tell ye a thing aboot Bob, we used tae blether away as electricians, you know, he says 'One night', he'd a grudge against the police, but 'One night' he says, 'ah went doon tae the picture hoose, the Lyceum' which is long gone noo, an he says 'Ah wis trying tae get a light' an he says 'ah stood at a close mooth like this, trying tae light a cigarette, an this lassie come doon the stair' an she saw the silhouette of Bob and she screamed, two policemen were stannin at the fountain across the road an they come runnin across the road an grabbed him so Bob explained 'Ah'm only trying tae light a-' . Needless tae say they kept him in overnight because she was screamin so the charge was

dropped but Bob come in an he was swearing 'Ah, there were no need to take me in at all.' He served in the Navy during the War an aw the rest o it but that was his grudge against the police an he got a good drink in him, his brother gave evidence, he says 'Double-barrelled gun came oot' so he went an shot the policeman, it's sad.

MM: Ah'm afraid time's runnin short with us now.

HM: Yes.

MM: If it would be ok with you we would very much like to come back and speak to you again.

BM: Aye.

MM: But we can come to you house to do it if that's easier.

HM: Well, it's quite easy comin here.

MM: Is it?

HM: Yes, aye.

BM: Aye.

HM: Uh huh, we're going shopping anyway so it's no problem.

MM: Ok. Well, we're going to be re-interviewing folk that we saw yesterday, as well, quite soon.

HM: Uh huh, that's fine.

MM: Because, I'd like to know more about Burns, living in Burns' house as suchlike.

BM: Aye, that's interesting.

MM: And I want to know more your working life as well, at the ICI, cause ICI was an important place.

BM: Aye, ah worked in the, actually ah worked in Huddersfield for a year before ah came back up tae scotland.

MM: Did you? Right.

BM: Ah came back tae Dumfries an there was no work so ah went tae Belfast an a worked wi B French and Company an then ah come back tae Dumfries again, nothing doin, so the chap at the Labour Exchange, obviously interrupted his coffee break, he comes an he has a plastic cup. Ah says 'Ye've got circulars' so he hauled them oot. He mentioned one, the big power station up in Argyll, ah says 'No way, the weather's winter' he says 'Sellafield' an says 'Sellafield's on strike', it wis then. 'Huddersfield', ah says 'that'll do, Huddersfield, ah'll go doon tae Huddersfield' so ah stopped there for a year workin wi the ICI tae Huddersfield for a year. Ah liked Huddersfield, ah would have stayed there but ah was courtin heavy at the time, so on the phone aw the time tae Marilyn, ah wis too far away fae her [laughter].

CM: Can we just say for the tape, Heather, what's your surname-?

HM: McNee.

CM: McNee. It's just to say that you've been involved as well, asking useful questions.

MM: I'll switch the machine off at this stage.

CM: Yes, thank you very much.

End of interview.