

Interviewee: John Dickenson (JD)	Interviewer: Caroline Milligan(CM); Mark Mulhern (MM) also present
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CM: So, we thought we would start with a few questions just about your childhood. Is that ok?

JD: Yea, great.

CM: So, if you could tell me, first of all, when and where you were born.

JD: I was born on the tenth of April 1936, at 20 Millburn Street, Kirkcudbright. In a snowstorm [laughter].

CM: And...

JD: In the attic, as it happened, in those days they used the attic.

CM: So, and was there, would a midwife come to the house or it would be-?

JD: it was the, the District Nurse would do it.

CM: Yea, ok, that's grand. So, did you, how long were you in Kirkcudbright, because you-?

JD: Ah, well, ah've moved about quite a bit. Ah must have left Kirkcudbright within a few months because parents moved to Underhill, Dalry, cause father was working for the Galloway Water Power Company and they were gonna be moving to Kendoon, so just before Christmas 1936, they moved to Kendoon and I was there...1948 I unfortunately passed the eleven-plus, no, it was the Control and Bursary in those days an ah went to Kirkcudbright an ah was at Kirkcudbright Academy till 1952. An ah moved to Girvan where ah worked as a laboratory assistant until ah was called up to do my National Service, in the Navy, and after the Navy ah went down to Cheltenham, in 1956, an ah stayed there until about 1964.

CM: Ok.

JD: And then we moved up to Argyll and lived in several places around Argyll, came to Ae Forest, 1968, and in 1997 ah came to Dumfries.

CM: Ok.

JD: And I've been here ever since.

CM: Ok, that's grand, that's quite a lot to- [laughter].

**01m 59s.**

JD: Yes [laughter].

CM: Maybe I can just ask you, first of all, were your parents, were they from Kirkcudbright or from that area?

JD: No.

CM: No. They were-?

JD: Father was from Tyneside, from Haltwhistle actually, he'd been a miner, but the mines closed in 1931, during the slump, an he came to work on the Galloway Water Power Company. And ah don't know if you know anything about that but it brought in thousands an thousands of people, labouring jobs for a sheer pittance, but however, father being a miner they were in great demand for things like tunnelling an he worked, to start with, on the tunnelling, tunnel and after that he moved, ah'm not sure where else he moved, he became an electrician's mate an ah know he worked at Carsfad and Kendoon full time. Mother was born in Belfast, thanks to incompetent parents, they moved to, you're not wanting to hear all the places my mother lived in, I'm sure, but they eventually, they came to Kirkcudbright an that's where she was brought up an met father...i don't know if you want to hear this story. At Haltwhistle, it was Park Village, actually, where Father lived, and there was a castle, Featherston Castle, an the cook there was from Kirkcudbright, and the cook said 'Well, if you're going tae Kirkcudbright you must call to see my mother, Mrs Halliday', who was in one of the charity houses an it so happens my mother used to call there, her family didn't allow her to play with cards and things because they didn't, think was, that was 'The Devil' so she used to go to Mrs Halliday's to play cards [laughter] with Mrs Halliday's daughter and that's where they met.

CM: Oh, very nice. And so, would you like to talk us through a wee bit about your early years and your school days? And maybe, you know, something about what we were saying before we put the tape on about the changes that you've seen?

#### **School days 04m 09s.**

JD: Well, ah was brought up at Kendoon, ah went there, as ah say, at a few months old an it's a totally different world. Although it didn't happen when I started school, at that time those in Kendoon had to walk about three miles to catch the bus into Dalry School. By the time I went you only had to walk a mile but it was a lonely, miserable mile ah can tell ye, an ye used to wear short trousers an yer trousers used to get raw an the smell of wintergreen is still in ma head [laughter].

#### **04m 46s.**

My parents, Mother wasn't the easiest tae get on with, not, I mean for me, but she used to fall out with people, it was part of her...Father was the exact opposite. And Father was very interested in everything that was going on, wasn't very well educated, because he left school at thirteen, because he was the only one in the family who could earn money. Imagine that nowadays. The family, mother, father an maybe five or six kids, the only money coming in was a thirteen-year-old boy. His father had been burnt in the mines that's why that's why he wasn't working. So, from a very, very early age it was countryside, I was Davy Crockett from the year go, always claimed ah could catch a fish anytime ah wanted, that sort of thing an as ah got older, in fact when ah was quite young ah used to start going into the hills for the day, frying pan and a couple of slices of bacon, an this sort of thing, an when ah got a little bit older ah used to stay in these empty houses, that sort of thing and eat fish and be eaten alive by midges. And ah really, an ah was always interested in history, which was the other part, ah used to visit all the, get the maps out and visit the burial mounds and the stone circles and all that sort of thing. However, I passed the Bursary and Control as it was called, in those days, unfortunately, because ah wish ah hadnae gone tae Kirkcudbright, but that's sometiing else. It was a great thing in those days to do that but it meant ah was stuck in digs, it was just a child factory, ah mean it was full o kids, ye weren't allowed in when it was dry, ye had tae stay outside all the time so, how do you do your homework? And you do it all right at the weekend but not during the week. And the result is I was, I kicked against the bricks. Nobody asked why, that was always, you know, 'Why didn't ye do that essay?' It was assumed you were being lazy, however, ah left aged sixteen, thank goodness, and

the Rector, this was Kirkcudbright Academy, and the Rector said 'Well, we shouldn't let you go at Christmas time but I think you're as well to go' an from then on things were different,

**Work 07m 10s.**

ah got a job as a laboratory assistant at Girvan, because science was always my interest, did two years in the Navy, ah made the most of it, it was sort of museums and history during the day but the bars at night, you know, that sort of thing. Ah thought ah would never go abroad again, this was the only chance ah would get. Then, after that, several months ah was Davy Crockett, ah was away in the hills, stayed in the hills as long as ah could, as long as ah had food, oatmeal, dried potato, and catch fish an with all those things an a bit of Oxo cube, I could survive.

CM: What was the motivation? Was that because you were restless? Or was it because a sort of love of the-?

JD: It did come from my father actually, because he'd been a very keen Boy Scout, camping an all the rest of it an it grew from that an also when you went out into the hills ye saw the burial mounds, you know, it was history. The place ah went to was where Robert Bruce, according to Blind Harry, that's where he was hiding from the so-called English, from Argyll, you know.

**08m 31s.**

CM: Mm.

JD: And so there's, an there's S R Crockett, The Raiders, well The Raiders was the area Loch Meldrich and the Murder Hole and Loch Enoch and all that sort of thing. So that was all, it came from Father an his interest to know things, father wasn't well educated, but he always wanted to know the other side of the hill. But, you know, to do research, ye've got to have a certain amount of education, just to do the job properly. And that's where it came from really an then eventually I grew up an went down to Cheltenham an worked as a laboratory assistant, eventually got my Higher National Certificate and became a chemist an all the rest of it so that's the early years, that took me to the time ah got married.

CM: And then you moved back up-?

JD: Well, then, the ex-wife was a Civil Servant and when Civil Servants got married, in those days, that was the end, that was the end. And the job I was in, my boss was a crook and I'd put in a chitty for say, twelve beakers, well, he changed it to 120, because they were being bought from his company an so on. Now, eventually, ah went to a previous boss and he said 'Well, you're on your own, you've signed the chit.' So, I realised ah was, the difficulties ah was in, we both liked the countryside, so we decided 'Why not go for a small-holding and all the rest of it?' So, we decided to work on farms for a while which was a totally different side of life, of course, eventually got a small-holding but too many children came along. And It coincided with the economics of the 1970s which just went...so that's been, an then after that ah worked for the Forestry Commission [REDACTED] So, that's a very brief outline.

CM: Yep, that is, you've scooted about all over the place.

JD: It's actually quite logical, I think [*laughter*].

**11m 18s.**

CM: Yea, it is, it is, you're right [?].

JD: Chronological, that's the word.

CM: But you enjoyed your time small-holding, had that been a-?

JD: I thoroughly, yes, that was, as somebody was saying, I'm anti-social, ah don't think that's totally true, ah say ah'm a sociable loner an I do love cows. This, cows are, to go into a byre at night and stand between then as they're munching away on a cold frosty night is the most peaceful thing out, ah did love, an cows react, they're not all the same, they're like pet cats, they all have different temperaments an this sort of thing, so ah loved the small-holding but that was, we ended up with too many children, twins unfortunately.

CM: Oh, how lovely.

JD: Well, it was too many, as our friends used to say 'Aren't they lovely? Ah'm glad they're not mine.' [laughter]. And the ex-wife, ah wanted to sell up, an buy a house in Dumfries, but she didn't agree, said 'If you sell up ah'll leave you' so she left an that was it and most of that money was wasted in court cases but there you are.

CM: But you were drawn back to Dumfries.

JD: Yes, ah only came to Dumfries because ma mother was here, ah'd rather have gone down to France, in north France. I had an idea going to live in North Normandy, ah've a lot of family in Dorset, Weymouth area, an that sort of thing, an it would be easier to get to them from there than from here, an, but ah couldn't leave ma mother, ma father died in 1995, ma sisters were all miles away so ah had to stay and that was it. And she never appreciated the point but there you are, she died just in October there.

CM: Now, you were saying, before, that when you went out for these wanders into the hills and whatnot, I was wondering of you met other people because it's been-?

JD: In those days, very seldom, nowadays the Forestry have built roads and the last time I was in top of the Corserine, I don't suppose you know the Kells range but the Corserine, it was the time when girls wore these fluffy petticoats, ah thought 'That's the end', the magic has gone, the magic has gone and now the Forestry's got roads through there and it's not the same, it's not the same but ah mean ah'm never gonna be back so, but it's kina hard to explain, they weren't high hills, the highest was 2700 or something like that but it was the whole history attached to it. Look at them nowadays, you wouldn't think 'Oh nobody will have lived there' and yet people did and there were the little green patches, little mounds, it was fascinating.

**14m 14s.**

What was it? 'The hills o the sheep, the howes o the silent vanished races', pure, that sort of thing. It's kina hard to explain, ah've never lost that, it's kina hard to explain why. But then ah had tae grow up, you know, you have tae grow up, unfortunately. Which is a pity, if ah could have remained a permanent twenty-one-year-old it would have been quite pleasant [laughter].

CM: You'd get fed up with it, eventually, you would get fed up with it [laughter]. So, one of the things I remember you telling me about when we were in, when we met you in Dumfries, was about the murder house.

**History 15m 02s.**

JD: Oh, ah was at a talk last night about that at the library. It's about the Mary Timney, who murdered Ann Hannah, and the woman who wrote the book about the subject was giving a talk in the library last night. Now, I know the area quite well, though ah didn't know much about the murder because it was too recent, you know, I was at, this was the land of the Covenanters, Robert the Bruce, the standing stones and [?] red moors, burial cairns, an murder in the 1860s? Oh no [laughter], that's far too recent. An that was the truth and ah knew about it an ah knew the area. A gentleman called Willie McInnes, who was born in Dalmellington, had roots in Carsphairn, emigrated to South Africa in the, just before the Second World War, came back to the UK [United Kingdom] as a Lancaster pilot an

back to South Africa and worked. He must have been, well he was a lawyer or something like that because, well, I'll explain why in a minute. Once he retired he spent six months with one daughter, in South Africa, and six months with one daughter at Dalmellington and when he was in South Africa he found this long poem about the Carsfad Murder, an he was fascinated by this, so one day when he was at his daughter's in Dalmellington he thought 'I'll put an advert in the Galloway News' and he put an advert in an I answered, an I was the only one who answered. An I said 'Well ah didn't really know anything about the murder but ah knew the area very well because he'd all the questions about the area. Where was the school the kids were going to? And where would the people eat in those days, ant hat sort of thing? And he really, he'd send an email with four questions ah didn't know how to answer them but he had this ability just to, he didn't quite explain that part, he didn't quite explain that part and he'd, whether he was a lawyer or not, ah don't know, but he was that sort of-. It was very interesting because it made you search even further.

**17m 17s.**

When that was over he said 'Well, my father died when I was a few months old, could you help me?' With his family, well his family were, oh dear, ah've forgotten the name now, they were originally McClamrochs, that's a right Galloway name, and they became, this gentleman lost all his money in a gambling, in gambling, and he changed the name to Lansborough, Lansborough, and that name started in Galloway, there is a country singer called that, incidentally, Charlie Lansborough. Now, unfortunately, abroad, some people called Lansberg have changed it to Lansborough so at one time I done a one-name study an ah took every Lansborough I could find in the UK and more or less fitted them all in. And they were changed over to another computer, and ah lost it. Why ah lost that piece ah don't know, ah suppose ah must have had it in the wrong place. So that was, that was Willie McInnes, an he sent me a lovely big flower book, a huge thing, thick as, it cost ah think about nine pounds to post, so you can guess [laughter]. So that was, he was the one who got me going on the murder house, ah did a lot for that and of course ah went last night and there was one or two things that ah could tell, it's a pity the woman hadn't contacted me before she wrote the book, ah could have, one or two things ah could have pointed out. Incidentally, there's a ghost walk in Dumfries now, and one of the ghost walks is to go to see the, to get the ghost of Mary Timney. Do you know Dumfries at all? No?

MM: Not well.

CM: Just a tiny wee bit, really.

JD: She was hanged in Buccleuch Street, where Irish Street joins, and the corner here, was the jail, and it became a, they built a Clydesdale Bank and it's now an insurance office. Well, her body is down there somewhere.

MM: Oh.

JD: Yes, I think there's six people buried there.

MM: Oh right, aye.

JD: So that's how ah got an ah knew the area so well although ah, because ma mother said when they used to go, when she first went tae Kendoon they used to tease her 'Watch out when you walk by, when ye go by the murder house, there's ghosts.'

**Community 19m 45s.**

CM: Uh huh, how big a community is Kendoon?

JD: It was thirteen houses and it became fourteen.

CM: Ok. So, you would know all your neighbours quite well.

JD: Oh yes, they were the workers at the power station.

CM: Right.

JD: It was the Galloway Water Power and they must be making a fortune out of this weather [laughter].

CM: So had they, did they build, effectively build Kendoon?

JD: Yes, in the 1930s, it's quite a big scheme, they called it the Galloway Water Power Scheme, ye've got dams at the Deuch Dam, Ken Dam, Loch Doon Dam, Carsfad Dam, the Earlstoun Dam, all of these are Power stations, and Tongland Dam, Glenlochar Barrage, Tongland Dam, Tongland Power Station, it's a huge, it was a, one of the designers of it committed suicide because he thought it was going to be a failure. But it's been a money-spinner [?] to be old but cheap to keep up. And a lot of it's been computerised now, which is why Kendoon is now, has now been, the houses have been sold off, it's all worked from [?] as Earlstoun Station and Carsfad.

CM: Grand, did you, that's, the story about the Timney woman, is that right?

JD: Mary Timney.

CM: Mary Timney. Did you, was that something that you, you said your Mum had met or she-.

JD: The trouble is, I wasn't really that interested in it, I knew about it and I got talking to Mother about it, by this time she was in her nineties, you know, 'Oh' she said 'When we used to come by there', they lived at Underhill, Dalry, for a few months, waiting for the house at Kendoon to get ready and she went in with the workers' lorry every day they would buy the [?].

CM: Ok.

JD: Aye, it wasn't all Willie McInnes, he was the one who...

CM: Who piqued your interest, yep.

JD: ...that's right, yes.

CM: Cause I was wondering about other stories, then, that you maybe heard when you were a child, were there local stories?

JD: Well it is very poor history, the Covenanters weren't wonderful freedom fighters, they were the Presbyterian Taliban, that sort of thing, and that was the stuff. Ah mean that was, there's Polmadie village, it's, it'd be easier if you knew the area. There's a village called Polmadie, which is [?] the dogs, but it's believed that's where the kings kept their hunting dogs, madadh, Gaelic for dogs, or wolves. And there was the old Edinburgh Road, left Carsphairn, up in the hills, and come down by Carsfad and the toll road, between Carsphairn and Dalry, was built 1810, 1812 and there's a woman, Robert the Bruce got shelter for the night and she thought there was something suspicious about this man and she realised it was King Robert the Bruce or he wasn't [?]. And there's the Carlin's Cairn, the Cairn and of course the story is she built that cairn because Robert Bruce gave her some land but it wasn't, it really wasn't [laughter]. But that's the sort of story.

**23m 13s.**

CM: Yes.

JD: There were quite a few of Covenanters, one of the Killing Times started at Dalry, of course, was it Rullion Green or one of the battles, it started there? The story was that the Government troops who

were Highlanders, of course, Catholic Highlanders, as I keep pointing out to one of my Highland friends, they were supposed to be torturing this farmer, holding him over a fire, to get the tax out of him but it wasn't, they maybe torturing but it wasn't just quite like that. These were the sort of stories.

CM: Yes, and they were, I suppose were part of the reason why you then got that, developed that interest.

JD: Yes, well, take Robert the Bruce, if Blind Harry, ah know there's some doubts as to how accurate it was but he probably hadn't seen these places since he was Blind Harry, but ah went to these places, Loch Trool, you know, those places, it was exactly as he said. There was the Coorin Lane where Robert the Bruce was supposed to walk to hide the, hide his smell, because these dogs are following his scent. Everything, it fits, if it was made up, it was very lucky, but some of it must, there must be an element of truth in it. And, of course, S R Crockett, The Raiders, which used to be regularly on Children's Hour, I used to know that book off by heart.

CM: Tell us a wee bit about that because ah don't-.

JD: Ah well, oh dear, it's a big story. S R Crockett, he was, he had an idealised view of what things were like in the past, he also wrote things like short stories, Men of the Moss-Hags, Bog Myrtle and Peat. But The Raiders, it was all tied up with smuggling and in the middle of the hills there's a loch called Loch Enoch, the old books say it meant lochan loch, but it doesn't, it means Loch of the Height, in Gaelic, and there's sand, sharp sand there an they used to collect this for sharpening scythes and such like, so the hero of the story is Silver Sand. because he used to collect the silver sand and cart it down and sell it to the farmers and all the rest of it, an it's all tied up with smuggling who use Rathlin, not Rathlin.

**25m 47s.**

Oh, I've forgotten the name of it now, the island in the Solway, it just had an old-fashioned adventure story but all his stuff, I used to read things like Men of the Moss-Hags, you know, Moss-Hags where the troopers an ah used to go the places where the stories were. Ah now know it's, you know, nonsense. But there's a lot of old, you see, I used to, Kendoon was a Hydro-Electric Scheme so we were all electric, but none of the houses round there had electricity. Ah used to love going, Father was social, Mother wasn't, Father used to love going to these old folk as I did. Ah would sit there just sit in the ingle nook an listen to these stories, the smell of peat, now, these people would be my age now, seventies and eighties, and they'd have been born about the time of the Carsfad murder, an their fathers an grandfathers would have seen the enclosures so, you know-.

CM: Yea, you've got that-.

JD: Going back like that, and all that, of course, has changed. Well the Polmadie, you'll read the books, Polmadie was the result of wicked landlords, it wasn't. They shifted the line of the main road an that took away the trade and also, farming practices had changed. That was it.

CM: You were saying about going with your dad and listening to these old stories, what kind of stories were they telling, you know, was it [?].

JD: Anything from who's having it off with whom [*Laughter*] to-. You see, in those days, very popular was carpet booling...carpet bowling.

CM: Ok, yea.

JD: And, of course, everybody had bikes or walked an of course when the husband went off carpet booling [*laughter*] that fact. But we used to get them round to the history, I remember an old guy telling us, he had watched, he'd watched a peewit on an island in the river and the peewit carried the

chicks across, one by one on its back to the other side, but ah don't think that happened but that was the, a lot of these stories, like that.

**Recreation 28m 07s.**

CM: And much music or song?

JD: Yes, ah was brought up with music except jazz, of course that was the Devil's music. Oh yes, that was it an ah'm a jazz fan now, maybe that's why. But Mother, as ah said, she was from a peculiar family, all the family went for music lessons, piano lessons, except her. Why not? Because she learnt to play by herself, so her mother said there was no need for her to go for lessons. So she could play, she could extemporise, she'd have made a good jazz player but oh. She would play for Scottish country dances and choirs and things and there was a lot of music but ah remember the chap, there was a father and son, Robert Wilson and his father, and they lived at the Shiel of Castlemaddie, and that was right in the middle o nowhere an they both died of TB [Tuberculosis], it was prevalent in those days. And he played the moothie, a chromatic, an he'd bring in the latest music, he couldn't read music, of course, latest pop tune or the latest Jimmy Shand number, ma mother used to play an he'd hear it once and off he'd go [*whistling sound*]. Now that is a top-class musician, no matter what instrument he's playing, that was a...an ah'd sit an listen to him, you'd have thought there was more than one mouth organ playing. But ah was brought up wi music an ah still ah'm keen on music.

CM: Yea. Was that in the home, you know...

JD: In the home, yes.

CM: ...did you have a piano in the house?

JD: We had a piano, yes.

CM: And would other folk from Kendoon...

JD: Well, maybe...

CM: ...did you have gatherings?

JD: ...well, the younger ones used to come in. In the days before skiffle, we in effect we'd skiffle, somebody would be there with a comb and paper an somebody with a bodhran drum, somebody with a fiddle an Mother on the piano, so it was great fun, it was the sort of music you don't hear nowadays of course. A lot of Scottish stuff, that sort of thing.

CM: And who was it, was it your mum or your dad who particularly disapproved of jazz, or was that a more widespread [?].

JD: It was a widespread, at the time, but it was ma mother really. It was such a pity because she was such a good musician an to say a sort of music is bad is just wrong. An ah'm a music nut, ah just, ah'm always listening to music. Of a lot of kinds, into classical, as well.

**30m 24s.**

CM: And you mentioned the choirs.

JD: Well, she was, she had the, there weren't that many choirs, ah perhaps shouldn't have said that but she used to play for things like the Sunday School and the local ministers would take turn about to holding a service and she'd play for that. There were choirs but that wasnae important. She was brought up, I tell you, although she was brought up in Kirkcudbright, she used to come to the Salvation



Army place on the Sands and sing. There'd be scripture stuff, ah suppose, but she was also good with the Burns' stuff, she was requested to sing at Burns' Suppers, you know, the girls, the women came up and sang an buggered off, you know [*laughter*]. It wasn't suitable for the girls. But that's, so she'd a very broad interest in music. Big Band was just acceptable and no more, because you could dance to it, but jazz, no, 'Turn that rubbish off'.

CM: So, what, did you have a radio in the house?

JD: Well, the radio, there was a snag with the radio, because we lived in a hydro-electric scheme with high tension cables going...

CM: Oh, you would get all the static.

JD: ...when it was wet at all you, you just get no reception at all. In fact one of the little things ah remember from my youth, an it's must be jist, ah've been asked recently what's the earliest thing ah remember. Ah don't know if you would like to hear that.

CM: Yes.

JD: Well, Kendoon, with these high-tension when there was mist you saw fairy lights, you heard crackling an it's on the brink o my memory that I came out one day and saw these, now I think that would be when the lights were put off after the start of the War, ah wouldn't have seen that before. An ah think we'd been at a Halloween party or a Christmas party, gaun oot at night an seeing this. Once the lights came on, It wasn't the same, you know, you never saw quite as much.

#### **Customs 32m 25s.**

CM: Yea. Maybe you could tell us a wee bit about either Halloween or Christmas, you know, how these festivities were celebrated.

JD: Well, Halloween, of course, we used to dook for apples, a fork we used, wisnae hygiene in those days, incidentally. It was all games, ye know, Bee Baw Babitty and Here we go Looby-loo, and Here we Come Through the Dusty Bluebells, ah've forgotten them all now an The Farmer's in his Den and all that sort of stuff.

#### **32m 55s.**

CM: Did you go round the houses?

JD: No, well, not so much really because it was a small, later on they did, but we didn't, we dressed up for the party at the Recreation Hall, that's what we did. Though later on ah think they did, cause, and that was, we jist did the normal party games. And when you think of it, the sandwiches, ye know, paste sandwiches, cause during the War ye couldnae get, an the men used to go out and collect the hazelnuts cause ye couldn't buy hazelnuts, well ye lived in the country, maybe if ye lived in town you could have bought some of those but not in the country.

#### **Family life 33m 36s.**

CM: What about, just sort of going off on a tangent, did your parents grow anything?

JD: Oh, yes, it was almost a small-holding, Father had a large garden an allotments, which at first were very popular, but gradually people stopped using them, ma Father kept his going to the very end. Meat was, ah mean ah was too young to fully appreciate the problems wi our food, but ah think the food, the meat would have been the problem, you were depending on what the van brought. Now, ma father, because he had been brought up in poverty, well, as he put it, abject poverty, he didn't want lamb or mutton because that's what ye had tae eat when you're poor and of course you had to take what was coming an ah remember Father used to complain, 'Ah want beef', 'If you want beef ye can jump on your bike and get it', you know. What was the question again?

CM: Ah was just asking what they grew in [?].

JD: Well, ah mean, ah suppose we'd have to buy potatoes sometime. Latterly, they used to sell produce, cabbages and things, people would come to the door 'Can I buy a cabbage?' and that sort of thing and Father reckoned he bought his car largely from that. And of course, to start with he'd frames where he grew tomatoes and cucumbers and he eventually he got a greenhouse. We had plenty of this and he kept bees so we had plenty sugar so there was no problem with sugar. And eventually we got hens, started off with two bantams, a male and a female, 'Daddy what are they doing?' [laughter]. An he started with that and we got more hens and that was it.

**35m 20s.**

CM: And what about, was there any flowers, was there any of the garden given over to flowers? Or was it more-?

JD: Well, not much, Father wasnae, he said 'Ye can't eat flowers' which of course wasn't strictly true [laughter]. He wasn't interested in flowers; very practical he was.

**Customs 35m 40s.**

CM: That's grand, and so we could go back then and maybe talk a wee bit about Christmas.

JD: Christmas. Well, my father was English so we, he brought different habits, Mother was from a bigoted Northern Ireland Protestant family so that was a bit High Church sort of thing. However, we were probably the first to have a Christmas tree we had a Christmas tree every year. And Father was a shift worker so he wasn't always there for Christmas dinner at the venue but we always had a big party in the Recreation Hall, always the tree and always with Santa coming and all the games and everything, you know, it was...the women put in so much work to make it a great time for the kids, they really did, it was, you know, in the early days of rations you just think of getting stuff, it was very tricky. You couldn't just go and buy a lump of cheese, you know.

CM: What...

JD: Sorry.

CM: ...sorry, ah was just going to ask you about the decorations, you were saying you were the first for the decoration of the tree and I was wondering.

JD: We used to buy crepe paper strips and we used to make those, that sort of thing, but ah remember a lot o houses didn't bother at that time, but gradually it became a habit.

CM: Yea.

**Recreation 37m 06s.**

JD: And that was, those are the main festivals, of course we lived beside a river and of course ye spent summer down by the river. You think of a bunch o kids, the oldest, say, seven, down by the river by themselves. Ah said tae Mother 'You know, if kids, if parents brought up their kids up like you brought me up they'd be imprisoned now', when ye think about it. We used to go down there, we used to fall in the river, and come back soaked that sort of thing, you'd fall and hurt yourself, there were no adults there supervising you, that sort of thing.

**37m 40s.**

CM: And were you fishing, were you-?

JD: Oh, ah was a great fisher, right from the start, always claimed, ah was a good poacher, ah was, ah just said ah was Davy Crockett, to be quite honest and rabbits, ah used to get my pocket money selling rabbits, that was before the myxomatosis, of course. Two shillings a couple, two shillings a couple, that's what ah got.

CM: Where did you take those too?

JD: The local butcher, you know what they used them for? They used to cook them with chicken and rabbits took on the taste o the chicken an many a person would by chicken thinkin it was, buy rabbit thinking it was chicken. That's what happened in these days [laughter]. That was it.

CM: That's fascinating.

JD: Ah was also taught how to catch moles, I caught the occasional pheasant, my parents weren't happy about that cause, it was probably illegal. You see, there's tbis little enclave of industrial workers, unionised, industrial workers, well...comparatively well paid, compared to round our estates. Of course they all had, they all had people there to watch out for these horrible communists coming in and pinching our stuff, sort of thing. An ah mean, the farmworkers in those days were terribly badly treated. You know, up until the 1960s they could be sacked at a moment's and chucked out of the tied house, at a moment's notice, literally. Ah saw that happen, that was when ah was livin up near Glasgow an because they weren't entitled to holidays until 1948, and really, farmworkers' kids used to come, days like this, without a coat on and this sort of things. And they lived by and large by oatmeal, thank goodness, those days have gone. As ah said, ah saw the end of a way of life.

CM: Who taught you these skills of catching pheasants and-[laughter].

JD: Well, ah did get the Scout magazine, ah joined the Scouts for a month, much to Father's disappointment ah left. [REDACTED] there was a neighbour that had been a gamekeeper and he taught me catching moles, ah used to go around with him an he taught me to catch moles.

**40m 50s.**

CM: And did you get, would you get paid for that service, for catching moles? That was-?

JD: No, no, no.

CM: No.

JD: To start with, if ah caught any ah gave them to him and he used to skin them in those days they used to get threepence a piece or something for them.

CM: Yes.

JD: That's long ago. The only thing ah was actually paid for was for the rabbits.

CM: For rabbits.

JD: Yes, yes, that's right.

CM: Sorry, the weather took me away [laughs] a wee moment.

MM: Well, that's us beyond our time, actually.

CM: Is there anything else, I mean we'll try and-.

**Dumfries and Galloway 41m 22s.**

MM: I was just gonna ask one last question, I we could, before we finish off. You were talking about your love of the landscape, or the hills...

JD: Yep.

MM: ...and you were saying one of the most notable features of the landscape was how it brought history to life...

JD: That's right.

MM: ...and ah wondered, this is maybe a meaningless question, but was it the, your experience of the landscape that drew you into history or was it your reading of history that drew into the landscape?

JD: Ah think it was both.

MM: Aye.

JD: There's one or two moments, ah remember when ah was very young, you know when in the frosty weather sometimes things seem very close? Ah remember ah was up the river helping Father gather firewood an the hills looked so close an ah must have been seven or eight, no more than that. And he said 'Why don't you take a walk up the River Polmadie, towards the hills, and that's what ah did, the next day. That was probably the start but it was ma reading, Father used to bring books out the library, the Reverend Dick's Highways and Byways of Galloway and Carrick, which ah did love and there's The Mennock and Neighbouring Hills and Galloway: The Spell of its Hills and Glens, which ah've subsequently bought, incidentally. And ah used to read that, plus Crockett, S R Crockett, and he also wrote some factual stuff, as well. It tied up, ah just loved the hills, there's something about the hills.

MM: Yes, yes, yes.

JD: But to look, brought up in Kendoon, it's like a museum, the sight of old castles, or peel towers, it would be rather, that sort of thing. An there were the stone circles and burial mounds, plus the old roads and old routes, that sort of thing.

MM: Yes.

JD: There is so much history around there.

MM: Yes.

JD: And so much of it is now covered up with Forestry.

MM: Of course, aye.

JD: Ye jist look at the countryside now, all right, they've left an open space now and again somewhere. But in, these empty houses that were dotted about, every mile and a half, every so often. It must have been a terribly lonely life for the women and the men would go to gatherings and clippings and all the rest of it.

MM: Well, they'd be busy working, no doubt.

JD: Funnily enough, there's, one of the loneliest ah've seen is called the Clenach...

MM: Uh huh.

JD: ...it's near Carsphairn, and the last people there was a friend's wife's grandparents.

MM: Right.

JD: And ah said 'Why did they go there?'

MM: Yes.

JD: Because ah mean, you know, the sound o the hills.

MM: Yes.

JD: And he said 'Well, if you were newly married an you went to work there the pay was quite good. You didn't need much furniture because you had fitted beds and everything. And ye stayed there until the kids had tae go tae school, then you went somewhere more civilised.'

MM: Aye, aye.

JD: And that was the advantage.

MM: Yes. That's quite good when you're getting going and you don't have much money and-.

JD: That's right, and the hierarchy of the farmworker, because shepherds were a bit higher up.

MM: Oh yes.

JD: They were a bit-.

MM: Well, thank you very much.

CM: Was there anything else that you wanted to tell us about just now? Ah mean we can have another, another session, if you like, we can do another follow-up interview.

JD: If you want.

CM: Well, it's quite nice, it gives you a wee bit of time to reflect as well.

JD: Ma father was a terrific, he was a bit of a, like myself, a bit of a squirrel and he used to give talks an things to the old folks, he used to go, [?] haven't ye? Ah was told off once, you know? For calling me an old-age pensioner, 'No ah'm not. Ah'm an old-age pensioner.' Because ah get a pension [laughter]. And ma mother died aged ninety-nine, just-.

**End of interview.**