

Interviewee: Jean Anderson (JA)	Interviewer: Tania Gardner (TG)
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TG: This is Tania Gardner interviewing Mrs Jean Anderson on the third of April Two thousand and fourteen, in Kirkcudbright. Mrs Anderson, you were born and brought up in Kippford I believe?

JA: That's right.

TG: And you've ended up here in Kirkcudbright, there's a long way from there to here!

JA: Exactly!

TG: In yer life but not actually in physical terms, no. What was Kippford like when you were a young girl?

JA: Well, it was a very...a hard-working fishing village. Rockcliffe was the one where everybody stayed who was somebody, but not Kippford, Kippford was a fishermans village. And dad had a...well, I was born in Gibbs House, which was a smallholding at the top o' the hill out o' Kippford 'cause there's quite a steep hill, and I was an only child until I was ten, and then I got a baby brother! But, before that, we delivered the milk, every morning, and sometimes at night to the hotels, but that wasn't regular it was just the everyday folk got their milk.

TG: So you were living on a farm, or you were...?

JA: That's right, that's right.

TG: Yes. And your dad was...was he the farmer or was he the dairyman?

JA: Well at that time it was just in the middle of the first depression, or the Thirty-one depression, and dad farmed but he also wis a fully trained qualified house-builder.

TG: Really?

JA: So he tried to work the two jobs together, and of course mum stayed at home.

TG: And did she work on the farm then?

JA: Oh yes, very much so, aye. She had been a cook, in Kippford, and then when they got married they moved up to this...this house there.

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TG: Oh right! Is it a smallholding or is it a farm?

JA: It's a smallholding. Really, it was...that's its original state but it's been changed since then.

TG: So it was a long cottage really.

JA: That's right.

TG: But it does have an upstairs in it.

JA: No, no. And the animals, you see the oriel window that sticks out above the porch, well can ye see a sort of white building beyond that?

TG: At the back, yes.

JA: Well that was where the animals were kept, but then you could come round the corner and go into the byre, and we only had twelve cows.

TG: Ah right.

JA: So it was quite small, and the surplus milk went...was collected by tanker, and came...I don't know in these days whether it was Dumfries or Kirkcudbright, but it came for processin' intae the main bulk, the bulk tank.

TG: So that would be the Stewart [?] Dairy would it be?

JA: It could be I'm no' very sure.

TG: It would be the beginnings of collecting the milk anyway.

JA: Yes, I think it was.

TG: So you would have a lovely view down over the estuary then?

JA: Well, we did. Now, ye've jist reminded me, there's a wee story about that house which I'm sure I should tell you. At the gable end, there is a...there was, a circle there probably still is, a round window. And in that round window, the bygone people used to stand and when the excise-man came down to the village, they could signal right out into the estuary, to tell the ships that were carrying the contraband, stay off! And now, unfortunately, after we left, we sold it and the lady that bought it took that window out.

TG: Oh that's a pity.

JA: It was a shame.

TG: 'Cause that's a [histories]...it's a real story.

JA: That's right. And she certainly propped it up below, I don't know what the reason behind that was, she propped it up below and it had a' the details on it but it wasn't quite the same, you know.

TG: But this was called Gibbs...?

JA: House.

TG: House. So perhaps Gibb was a person who'd had it in the past?

JA: Well, I think probably he was one of the...less welcome members of the community! I'm no' sure, but! There's another funny thing, when dad...at one time dad thought he was puttin' in an extension on it but it never came about, and when he was digging out the extension he found (I could have got them for ye), a wee tiny coin, which had a hole in it, and oh he kept it because he thought it was interestin', and Mr...he was a potato merchant in Dumfries, and he had a house at Kippford, and he was always goin' around trying to find unusual things. He said tae dad, "John, if ye give me that coin I'll send it down to the museum, in London, and get them to research it," ye know, find out. Back came word that it was the coinage that Chinese boys got for...instead o' wages ye know that they could exchange, and it was what they called a shebeen.

TG: Shebeen?

JA: I think that's the right one they'll sort it out. It's just a very early pub. And that's where the origin's o' that...but ye know this, I don't know the origins o' the house.

TG: No. Well that would be interesting, especially because of its position, and because of the window. There's more to it than just a smallholding. So you lived up there, and was there a school in Kippford itself.

JA: No, Barnbarroch, Barnbarroch School was like the first, the primary we went to there. We walked. When my brother started school he'd to go to Dalbeattie, and of course now it's a pottery, the old school is a pottery.

TG: Is that what the school is? On the corner there, on the main road?

JA: That's right.

TG: And what sort o' size would that be? How many children might have been there?

JA: You know when you're small it's difficult! I think there'd be about twelve or maybe fourteen. Barnbarroch village supplied a lot o' their pupils. And Kippford

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of course, there was quite a few walked up, and down. It was easy for me I was quite close tae it, but I could say here because she's dead and gone, I absolutely hated and detested the teacher! And you got her from primary one to primary seven when you were [?]

TG: That's the big thing about these rural schools.

JA: She used to take spites at families. You know, and if you were fortunate enough to be one of her favourite few you were alright, but...oh she gave me a terrible life, aye she did.

TG: So your school experience wasn't great?

JA: Not good there, no.

TG: But did you enjoy meetin' up wi' yer pals though?

JA: Yes and no, the life up at the house was quite isolated. Because I had a lot o' chores to do from when I was quite tiny.

TG: Everybody had chores.

JA: Yes, we did. And we'd to feed the chickens, and feed the calves, and then sometimes deliver the milk take the milk down to the village! And also, below the house, it was orchard [Knowes]. Now Mr and Mrs McLelland were the owners o' a' this land, but there was a...see that wall that runs up tae the...?

TG: Yes, I do.

JA: Well that wall is the march, so another owner had all the land on this side, and the McLelland family had all the land on the other side. But dad rented the fields beyond that, because it wasny viable, it was so little, it wasny viable on its own. So there we are, that's how it was.

TG: A lot of work. And you would be delighted in some ways to have a baby brother when he came along after ten years?

JA: Yes I was, I was.

TG: And you would have chores to help wi' him then?

JA: Oh absolutely, absolutely. And I mean one time, maybe I'm kinda goin' off, but one time mum, who never got out very much I mean she got up to Dalbeattie once to do the weekly shoppin' and that was about it, but she was a member of Colvend Parish Church, and they had a mothers union, and oh she was desperate to go to this

meeting you know, I think it was maybe the first one after John was born, and dad said, "Yes of course you can go, I'm here, and Jean's here," and

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mum sort of said, "now you will look after him?" "Oh yes, I'll look after him." She wasn't even on the bus it was a lane, ye can see it there the lane went down to the main road, and she wasn't even on the bus, when I said, "Can I bath him dad?" And he said, "Aye of course just carry on!" And he got into his easy chair, and I got the zinc bath out, and I got the baby a' prepared, and nursing instinct must have been in me from a very early age, and I got him in, and I washed him and we played for a wee while, and then I lifted him out, and dried him and put on his nightclothes, and give him his feed and when mum came back he was all tucked up in his cot sound asleep. But she was wary, she said, "Has he been like that all night?" Dad said, "Yes, of course," and I said, "No no mum, I bathed him!" So there was a bit of heated discussion.

[*Laughter*]

TG: Yes, whether that was a good thing to do! But you obviously were very...you wouldn't have done it if you hadn't felt confident.

JA: No no I don't think I would've, and of course dad was there, right there.

TG: Yes. And the other thing is you would have watched your mum doing that, so often.

JA: So often, uh huh.

TG: So when he started toddling around he would be helping by his way wi' the chores?

JA: Well, well he was supposed to but, well we always said mum favoured him and I think most families the mother favours the boy, and the father favours the girl, it doesn't always work out, but I knew I was dad's blue eyed girl I mean I followed him all over the farm and did all sorts o' things there. And he had me doing things...health and safety oh dear! They had a...during I mean it was during the war years and it was terrible to get help, you could not get help. One or two o' his friends were very good and ma mum's family were very good at comin' down from Dumfries, but one o' the things that we had to do was bring in the hay, and we had one o' those old fashioned I don't know if you've ever seen them, hay rakes, wi' the great big hoops at the back ye see? And we had (and she comes into the story later on), we had one Clydesdale horse, Bette, (and there she's), and she was just a member o' the family. And dad put her onto the hay rake and then got me up...I think I would be...I might o' been ten I think, and there was a foot pedal, and what ye did was ye had to get the horse to walk in a straight line, and ye had tae rake in the hay, and then at a certain point ye'd tae push the pedal, and it lifted the hoops and that released the line o' hay. And then when all the hay was like that, they gathered

it up and made the hay stacks. Now, I did that, I did that until, there was a terrible swarm of these horrible clegs, these great big things, and it bit her, and of course she reared. She didn't run away she

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just reared, and I come off it, and I threw the reins down I said to dad, "Ye can do yer own work now I'm goin' home!"

[*Laughter*]

TG: But he trusted you to do all of that?

JA: Oh aye, he did.

TG: And again you would have sat beside him and watched him doin' it so often that you would...it was second nature to you?

JA: That's right. It was only...we had turnips, we did have turnips. [*laughs*] We had a bull.

TG: Oh gosh!

JA: And he rejoiced in the name...they always said my dad was next door to a communist. I think he was actually, but they had this bull and that's why they called him Stalin.

TG: Stalin the bull.

JA: And you know he used to say to me, "Now there's the fodder for Stalin, and just you go into the field and spread it," and d'you know I went right up to that bull, spread it out, and came back and never once, never once did he lift his head in any kind o' distress, no. But, the other funny wee story was, when it came for him to go, because mum kept sayin', "He's too old and ye'll have tae part with him before he gets cranky." Oh and dad put off and put off and then decided, well she probably was right, so he fixed up when [Willetts] Mart would take him, and then, he went round all the local farmers tae get their help, and their dogs and their sticks and all the rest of it, and they all converged in our house at a certain day, and dad went down into the field, and got Stalin, and it was...(ye cannot see it there but) there's a lane down to the bottom fields and once he was into the lane you know he was confined.

TG: Yes.

JA: So he walked up, and there was this great array o' tough farmers wi' there dogs and that, and he walked straight intae the float, and dad followed him and chained him up and that was the end of it.

TG: So he was still docile.

JA: He was and he was an Ayrshire and they're nasty, can get very nasty but he never was nasty wi' us.

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TG: Did you ever go to the market with your dad?

JA: Frequently.

TG: In Castle Douglas?

JA: Yes, I loved to go wi' dad, and the great treat was gaun intae the...what's the name o' the hotel there?

TG: The Station, not the Station...

JA: No, further down from that, and it really is sort of mainly for the farmers...

TG: The Market Inn?

JA: The Market Inn. We went in there and had a meal and that was a great excitement. Now, there's a wee story about the market d'you want me to tell you that one?

TG: Oh yes please uh huh.

JA: Well, when I was about seven, mum saw in the paper, an advert for sewin' machines you know how they used to...well, you don't know but...

TG: A treadle?

JA: They used tae have things other than animals you know, they would sell other than animals.

TG: Oh implements?

JA: Implements, and things that farmers' wives would be interested in. And she saw these machines and it would be a treadle, and oh she was desperate tae get one, just desperate. We were quite poverty stricken, really we were, when I look back on it we were very, very poverty stricken, but she decided that this was what she would want, so dad set off for the market, and he was away all day, and he came home at night...with a bicycle for me.

TG: [*Gasps*] Oh no!

JA: And it was a two-wheeler, and none o' yer stabilisers or anything in these days. A wee two-wheeler, and I don't know, I don't know whether mum didny speak to him for a week I can tell you the atmosphere probably, would be something! Anyway, they were taking the piped water into the village, and because we were a kind o' offshoot...well we were all the way down you know, houses had been built outside the village, and we were to get water, and so were the McLellands at the big house down the hill, and the Gardners got it, and there

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was this old Irishman, who had to dig the trench. Now, I suppose the man would only be in his forties or fifties to me he was ancient! And he spent as much time as he thought was possible, teaching me to ride the bike!

TG: Oh lovely! What a lovely story. *[Laughs]*

JA: And I could ride the bike, and aye it was grand, and I used to go down the village, oh aye the two milk cans were hang on my handlebars. But that was the story o' the milk.

TG: What about your mum, did she ever get a sewing machine then?

JA: Never, she never got it.

TG: Oh dear.

JA: No she did not. The other sort of story involving the horse, was dad had a flat-bottomed cart, ye know that's just without sides or anything it was...and he used to use it...he delivered quite a lot o' turf and stones and things if people in the village that wanted them. And he decided this day that he would take me. So, it was a big flat and got...put Bette intae it, and as we went down the hill, a car...unheard of in these days because...

TG: There wouldny be many cars around?

JA: ...hit the back, or maybe it would be one o' the first ones, hit the back o' the cart, and she shied, and ye know dad was of course dad was with us, and dad picked me up I couldny hae been very old, and he threw me over a wall intae a neighbour, one o' the villagers garden, and it was full o' nettles, and I had the most awful stinging nettles, nettle sting.

TG: He was afraid that the car was going to damage you?

JA: No he was afraid the horse would take right off. See Kippford has that very bad corner at the bottom, and he didny think she would make it round the corner. Oh but she did, and she was fine, but I'm afraid I was kinda bruised! It didny put me off.



TG: That was you trying to keep you safe and he got you nettle rashed!

JA: He did indeed! But that was the story of Bette, the other funny story but it wasny...aye it was Bette, it's in here somewhere. She was huge of course, Clydesdales are the biggest, and my cousin my three cousins used tae come down...their mother had been left a cottage in the village that she could come down to at holiday time, she let it at other times, but she could come down. So, all durin' the summer holidays there was a family of six of us you know the cousins gathered, and the great highlight o' this holiday was tae come up tae us, and get

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the horse, and persuade her to walk...you see that big...well it's no' such a big hill but, there's a big rock on it, and we persuaded her to walk to the rock, so that we could climb on her back.

TG: Oh that was a good idea.

JA: So we climbed on her back, and then we did the riding of the marches, round the field! And I mean she went plodding on you know.

TG: Was she very docile.

JA: Oh very, she was lovely. And then of course the next problem was to persuade her to go back to the rock, so that we could get off!

TG: How many of you would be on her back at once?

JA: Oh just...we did it singly, maybe two at the outside, aye two. So that was...

TG: And did you have to look after her, did you have to brush her tail or her feet?

JA: I never really remember much about that, one thing I did...dad was always awful frightened when she was in the stable, if I went in...in fact I was forbidden to go in, because it wasny that she would harm me, but she leaned on you, and I mean she was about...oh I don't know, quite heavy, aye.

TG: She'd have squashed you!

JA: And what I loved to do was go down and stroke her feet, 'cause they're all feathery and fluffy, aye. But oh she had a great temperament she did, and she was the first animal on the farm, I mean they started from scratch.

TG: And then of course because of your dad's doing his building with his flatbed, and she would be a very useful animal.

JA: That's right. Uh huh, and all the kids in the village knew her and they used to come up an'...an' then, when she died...funnily enough she had a stroke, seems

strange you know but she did, and they took her away and I remember mum was in floods o' tears that day. And then he got one from Dalbeattie Council, and they were giving it away to somebody who would just be good to them and feed them they didn't want money or anything, so dad took...Polly I think was her name? And he was very concerned because she only went a few yards, maybe to the hedge oot there, and she would stop. And she would stop, and nothing, nothing would move her, for about two or three minutes and then she'd walk on. Then he discovered that she had been the horse that got the dust cart, ye know the rubbish, and she'd been used to stoppin' at a' the different houses! So after that, he always carried a pocket full of carrots, and that's how he persuaded her to move forrit!

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TG: To keep moving! *[Laughs]*

JA: So that was them.

TG: There wouldn't be much in the way of traffic you said about that car coming then, and you talked about your mum going in on the bus to go into Dalbeattie to do her shopping. What other...would the fishermen have cars or...?

JA: I don't think so, there was one kind o' character though that was there, and that was Johnny Handy. Now I don't know which company bus company but there's be about three o' them likely, but he did the shore run. Ye know how Kippford goes off on an angle, and then the main road goes round by Rockcliffe, Sandy Hills you know right round, well that was the run that Johnny did, and it was a well known fact that Johnny never left anybody behind, he could be hangin' to the roofstraps, but Johnny lift...

TG: Took everybody. Would it be going as far as Dumfries then?

JA: No.

TG: No, it would just be going to the villages.

JA: No, I think it would only go to Dalbeattie, you know that circle, round. And he took crates of hens, and he delivered newspapers, and it was a social occasion because everybody met everybody else, and all the rest of it, so that was Johnny. It went for a long long time that bus, it was a bit of a lifeline really.

TG: Absolutely, because otherwise you would have had to walk, what kind of shops were there in the village?

JA: Just the one, which is still there, it's called The Ark. But my aunt and uncle had it, when it was a grocers, when it was just a straight grocers shop. Of course, there was...men came round tae get yer shoppin' list every week, ye know there was...what was their name again? In Dalbeattie there was one licensed grocer, at

least, and then I think the Co-operative did it, you know came around and the butcher, there was a butcher.

TG: Did he come in his van or did he come to get your order?

JA: No no he came in the van, and we had a wee wooden box at the end of the road, the end o' the lane, and mum used to put...well when it was a big order like a grocers order he came up to the house, but when it was the bakers they delivered. Bakers, or the butchers, mum put a line in this wee box, and probably the money, I never remember money but she would put the money in and then I would be sent down to retrieve whatever it was, and she said never ever let Jean

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go if it's loaves, because I picked, I loved a plain loaf, and I picked at the end and it was if a mouse had been at it you know, by the time I walked, and it was...

TG: Up the road.

JA: ...up the road, up to the house, I had eaten about half the loaf!

TG: I can imagine!

JA: Never left me!

TG: I remember doin' that too. And that was only from the Paul Jones to High Street!

JA: Lovely.

TG: What about...did you ever have a van that came round with clothing on it?

JA: No, I think they used to have these...what did they call them? These men wi' packs on their back.

TG: A pack-man?

JA: uh huh.

TG: It might not have been a pack-man...I think that's where it would originate from, the word pack-man.

JA: But, I think they walked everywhere, or maybe they had a bicycle I don't remember much about them, except that they would come, and they had their cottons and reels and...they were between a tinkers and actual shops, you know they were a...socially above the tinkers.

TG: But they were selling things like threads and buttons and things like that that your mum would need?

JA: Oh yes, uh huh, that's right.

TG: Can you remember, where would you get your clothes for school or your shoes.

JA: Oh well Dalbeattie, was quite well...I mean we forget that so many of these shops have closed now, and there used to be one shop in particular, right...just down from the post office, Porter I think was their name they called it, and mum got all her stuff for me there. But you know it was war years and so much o' the stuff was second hand.

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TG: So what...when were you born sorry?

JA: Thirty-two.

TG: Thirty-two, uh huh. So as you say your early years were at a difficult time.

JA: Yes they were.

TG: And there was no shame in buying...procuring second...

JA: Nobody thought anything of it, no.

TG: Like a charity shop.

JA: No, exactly. No, just friends, and if once...I mean the children grew oot o' things and you got them and hand them on you know, and that's how we operated.

TG: And also, probably you only had like [you'd have] your school clothes and you'd have your play clothes, and maybe a Sunday...?

JA: Yes we always had our Sunday...

TG: Your mum was a member of the Colvend Church, and did you go there on a Sunday?

JA: Not really because it was quite a distance, nut I went to Sunday school down in the village hall at Kippford, they had a wee Sunday school there.

TG: So did you...well you had a lot to do because you had [to] work on the farm, and you had school to do, you had all sorts of things, so did you go into the village and hang out watching the fishermen.

JA: No, never. If I was down there I was down for a reason, a job you know.

TG: And tell me about your extended family, like where were your grannies and...

JA: No, my grandma on my dad's side died when I was quite young about 4, I cannot really remember her, I remember the cousins in Wales comin' up for the funeral, but I can't...and my grandad existed for a bit longer. But like all these big families I mean there was a lot of falling out, and a lot of...and he came to live wi' mum and dad and I don't know where they put him! I mean I really don't because it was just a but'n'ben.

TG: It looks as if it was longer than that but as you say the animals were at one end.

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JA: The window that you see stickin' out above the porch, that was the bedroom, and they've one that's flat against they buildin, that was well, living room/kitchen, no, aye living room and kitchen. And there was just a sort o' slit between, a fairly wide one I don't think it'd be six feet, but that was the kitchen and mum was the most fantastic cook, and baker and the things she did! I mean even yet I can melt thinkin' about what she produced.

TG: And she had been a cook in the village, in the hotel?

JA: No, private house.

TG: In a private house.

JA: Uh huh. And she...it was so funny because we didn't have electricity of course, it was all paraffin, and she had this wee paraffin stove in that kitchen that wee tiny kitchen, and it was like...they called it an oven, but it was a tin box, that sat on top ye see? And every now and again the whole thing would go up into flames, and she would just casually say, "Open that door," and they opened the door onto the cobbled area outside and she just threw the whole thing out. And then when it was cool, she went and collected it all up and put it all together again the new wick in the new paraffin and started again!

TG: She just accepted that that was something...the way it happened.

JA: That's how it happened. And of course we had a dry toilet, I forgot to talk about that sort o' thing! Beyond that holly tree was the...well the toilet.

TG: And was it a seat over a hole, or was it a bucket your dad then had to burn?

JA: No, it was a seat with a bucket, that's right. We had the best fruit bushes in the whole area!

[Laughter]

TG: So you had a fruit and veg garden too then?

JA: Oh well dad did we did, we had to because it was wartime you know? You just had to make what you could, but another funny wee story about that was...do you know much about farming?

TG: No, not really.

JA: Well, in the farm, in the byre, they have a sort of...a gutter, that's all ye can call it, and that's where the cows, I mean they're properly chained up and then that's where all there effluent and the rubbish comes out. Now it's very good manure of course you'll see them puttin' it in the fields round here.

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TG: You can smell it just now!

JA: Aye. But dad, he blocked off the outlet, and he filled the whole...I don't know what he called it, gripe, no? He filled it all, when he had cleaned it out, he filled it all with water, and he left it to stand, and he would take the brush and you know brush it out. Now that was liquid manure. And he unplugged, he took the hose outside and he managed to get it to the garden. So the liquid manure went straight to the garden.

TG: He was resourceful.

JA: Oh he was. Had tae be, had tae be because...

TG: And had he come from farming stock?

JA: Yes he had. There was seven of them. My mum's side has been well documented, but not my dad's, I mean we never really got...men didn't in these days, even now they're no' that interested. But yes, oh I could keep ye here for hours talking about my dad's side o' the family, but one o' the sort o' notorious stories in the family was that my grandad was a, he was a foreman really, to the bigger farms, the bigger herds, but one thing he was was totally teetotal, he would not drink ye see, and he ended up one o' the times, and I mean my uncles and my aunts used to make me laugh because they never knew when he came in the door, if he would say, "Right, we're packing up and we're going," you know he'd fallen out wi' the boss! So we're on the move! And he ended up at Crossmichael, now I think it was a relation back a McKee, McKee was a very popular Conservative MP and went in again and again and again, and I think it was him, his family that he fell out wi', but anyway, aye, it was this MP's mother I think, he was at Crossmichael, and the villagers wanted a pub. And she absolutely adamant they were getting no pub, she would not allow it. So grandfather marched up to her door banged on her door, and said, we'll say it's Mrs

McKee I'm no' very sure aboot that, "Mrs Mckee how much have you in your cellar." And she said, "That's none of your business," and he said, "It very much is my business if the ordinary workin' man cannot get a pint o' beer at the end o' the day, and you can sit and drink as much as ye like," and so he left, that was it. "Get out," "Alright I'm going anyway."

TG: Oh dear, and no notice in those days!

JA: Oh no no!

TG: So despite the fact that he was teetotal he saw that the menfolk were quite entitled to have a drink at the end of their workin' day, or the end of their working week.

JA: That was the communist side o' him!

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TG: Absolutely, yes, but then that's what we needed, yes

JA: That's right.

TG: So your mum really wasn't supported by her own parents.

JA: Well no, it was kinda sad in there because...whose story are we onto now, my mum's! My grandfather on my mum's side had a very good clog and shoe business, where Boots in Castle Douglas is now.

TG: Right, on the corner there.

JA: But the trouble was he'd dreadful asthma, terrible asthma, and the only thing that cured it, and I'm on the other side now, was whisky, so you know where that led. And he moved to Dumfries, I think...she never talked, well she never really knew an awful lot 'cause she was very young then, whether he moved to be nearer her family, because all the family is based in Dumfries, and just as a wee aside Alex and I are related.

TG: Through this?

JA: Well, my mother and his father are full cousins were full cousins, so that was how the relationship...it's no' very close, but so all the Andersons in Dumfries and a' the rest of it were in the town, and I think my grandma was an Anderson she would want back to her own family. And when he got there, he just got worse, I don't know if he even worked. But the older members there was seven o' them, they all had...well, one o' my uncles was a butcher, and another one was a shoemaker, and another one was a gardener you know, I think they maybe supported her quite a lot. But, my grandfather, when he went into one o' his drunken rages was quite...!

think quite horrific. And he threw grandma doon the stairs one day, and she was in the infirmary, in Dumfries, and funnily enough, when I trained it was Nithbank, and I used to go into that ward because we knew what ward it was and I would often, through the night if we were on night duty I would sort of stop and think, this is where grandma died. 'Cause she died.

TG: She died there in hospital.

JA: Aye she died, and mum was only seven.

TG: Oh dear.

JA: Which was very young. And after that she was just passed from one older sister tae another ye know?

TG: So she would be quite happy to have a job in service as a cook in a home, she would have her own...

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JA: Yes, and you know first of all she was in a...a piano wire factory in Musselburgh in Edinburgh. And then when the war came on, they did the stringing for the planes, that was the First World War.

TG: Really?

JA: And they used the wires, you know the wires for the planes. But then when the war finished of course that finished as well. And she was with a sister who was absolutely horrible to her, she lost her husband very tragically he died the day before armistice which was sad, turned her into a bitter old woman. So, after that mum went...she had to get a house that would give her accommodation. She went to St Abbs Head in Berwickshire, and he...the man who was the boss, the owner, had fourteen servants, and he was a bachelor.

TG: Wow!

JA: Fourteen, and she was very happy there she made a lot o' good friends among the staff and that, and he was very good to them. [What we did] tae his dining room, and an evening meal was served to the servants.

TG: Very nice, that's unusual

JA: Very unusual, and he always always made sure...he would come into the kitchen (now I'm off again, on a tangent!). The only time he was angry at mum, was because she was a kit...no wait a minute I'll get this right, she was a housemaid at that point, and the spare bedroom was very musty, and very...you know just no' very fresh. So she got a bottle o' Cleansol, which is an old fashioned...



TG: Is it like a bleach?

JA: No' quite as bad as a bleach, it's more like Flash, you know. And first of all she took the curtains down at the window and washed them and they were in such a state, although he was loaded! She had...after they were dry she had to sit and stitch them all the way down you see? It had a very strong smell this, I liked it, a lot of folk didn't, and of course she washed the carpet with it, and did a' the bedding and all this, and he passed, he passed the bedroom door, "Agnes, what's that smell," and she said, "I thought I would just freshen it up a bit you see." "You never asked my permission," and he marched into the room and he said, "Oh but what a difference," he said, "Oh I do admit it's a great improvement," and then he just stormed off! But then, he met her another day and he said to her, now this would be earlier, he said tae her...she was a kitchen maid at that time, and he said tae her, "Agnes, I think I will promote you, I think I will make you a housemaid," and he said, "on one condition, that you do not do what a previous house keeper," I think he said, "to my paintings." And mum sort of said, "I don't know what that is sir!" He said, "She scrubbed them all and they were Raeburn's!"

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TG: Oh my goodness me! Oh my goodness!

JA: And you know every time, every time Alex and I go round a gallery, and there's a Raeburn, we'll say, "Look!" You know. Was a' his family of course. But he promoted her! He had enough trust in her do that, and then of course I really don't know what happened there, I mean he might even have died you know. She had lots and lots of stories about that place, and actually, Alex and I went specially to stay there, so that we could look at the house, discovered it was a bed and breakfast, booked in for the following year, and went for one night we couldny afford any more he was chargin' a fortune. And the thing I remember brilliantly about that place was, "My wife is Norwegian, and she would be obliged if you would take off your shoes before you come in."

TG: Oh dear.

JA: Which I objected to most strongly, but I did it because I wanted to see the inside o' the house! And they had one o' those showers, early showers, that was like a hood, and it had the wee holes all over it, and you know you turned a tap on the side, oh I got pictures, we took pictures, but a gorgeous view of course.

TG: And that was in St Abbs?

JA: That's St Abbs, St Abbs House it was called.

TG: Isn't that fascinating. It actually must have been so special to walk in her footsteps, to have been where she'd been.

JA: Oh yes. But ye see, she stayed wi' me for twelve years, when...dad died very suddenly, dad died a fortnight before my wedding, and it was just instant it was a heart attack, and it was a pretty bad time for us all, you know, but mum was adamant that we went on, and had the wedding, that he wouldny have wanted to spoil my day you know? So we went on and we had the wedding. But after that, my young brother, who was just fifteen or sixteen by that time, got a job round the coast near Sandyhills, I canny remember the actual name o' the farm, in the farm, and he had got that job and he was there but when dad died, they sent for him, and he came home, and my cousin, who had a...you know the Kippford Caravan Site?

TG: Yes I do.

JA: Well, my cousin started that, he's dead now, but he started that, and John went over there and Jock took him on you know, for the time, but always always he wanted to go to Canada, always, it was as if he was almost born wi' the desire. And he stayed wi' mum, and of course in these days if...there was no will. And if that happened, the heir got everything, the mother got nothing, absolutely nothing. And he went...mum said I don't know how we're going to manage, but the lawyers were quite good they allowed her to sell the stock, the cows and

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anything that they had, and that sort of gave her the money to get the passage for John. So at eighteen, John sailed for Canada, and mum never saw him again.

TG: Really! He never came back?

JA: No. He's been back, once, but by that time she was dead.

TG: Oh dear, so how old...he was eighteen when he left, what year was that?

JA: Now wait a minute we were married Nineteen fifty-seven, and it would be the year after that, I don't think it was two year after that, no a year after that, when he left, so that'd be Fifty-eight. Aye that's right Christine was just a baby.

TG: And did he have a job to go to?

JA: Yes he did, he did. It didny turn out very successfully but, it started him, and then...cowboy, and fruit picker, and school janitor and school [ ? ] and something else I mean, it's all wood and he had tae get a staff tae take care of it, and all the rest of it, and actually now he's dying of cancer, seventy-one aye.

TG: Oh dear.

JA: Seventy-one, aye. So, that was John. We lost him for a wee while, while he was travelling, mum was terribly terribly upset, and she made me promise, and I would never ever do this to either o' mine, she made me promise I would never...when we

found him, I would never lose touch wi' him again. Now, I've kept it because we're both very close now, but I think it's an awful burden to put on a family.

TG: Yes, especially in the circumstances because you're not sure where his life's...where his life had gone.

JA: That's right. He's married now and has a family of his own, a grandad, and I speak to him on Skype every second Sunday.

TG: Well that's very nice, it is, but again in those days it would be a letter would get, and if a young man of eighteen and a letter, I can just imagine how often they came, not a lot!

JA: He said, he said he got in with three boys, there's a big story about why he left the farm and all this but I'll no' go intae it, and he got in wi' these three boys and they said that they were going up the west coast, they were hopin' to be make...right up the west coast and they were just goin' tae pick up jobs on the way, they had a car and there was a seat spare if he wanted to come, welcome. So that's what he did, and they just went as far as they could tae get...well sometimes it was fruit picking sometimes it was lookin' after animals, they did anything, and then as soon as they had enough money to move on, they moved

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on. And he went right [ how could I ] forget that name, it's the most popular place in Canada, right up in...British Columbia, ye know it's right at the top...

TG: Vancouver?

JA: That's it. Just outside Vancouver, and he's been there for fifteen/twenty years, married of course, and settled. But it never turned out quite what John expected, it was no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, at all.

TG: When you're on a smallholding, in a small village, the world's your oyster isn't it. And he'd be listening to the radio and the news.

JA: But the funny thing was, I said that mum sold them well after five years, John then was, well, into his twenties, aye it would be aboot twenty-three, they were able tae...it was earlier than that, it wasny five maybe three, he was able, or the lawyers were able to sell the house, and I mean what was it, one-thousand five hundred, and honestly tae his credit and I'll never never forget it, he divided it three, so we each got five hundred, mum, me and him.

TG: Oh that was...well he could have disappeared wi' that and...

JA: He could. And it was a lot then you know it was a lot, oh he could have, but no, he separated it out for us. So that's him, and there we are.

TG: So you obviously trained to be a nurse, did you go from...you went from secondary school in Dalbeattie then?

JA: That's right for what it was worth, wartime, shortage o' teachers.

TG: What kind of subjects were you doing?

JA: Oh just did English, Maths, Science, Home-economics but it wasny called that then! And we got Gym, and aye pretty basic.

TG: History Geography?

JA: History Geography aye.

TG: And did you enjoy that better than the primary?

JA: Oh yes I did, for one thing, if ye didny like a teacher you got moved on after forty minutes!

TG: Absolutely! And so did you decide early on that you wanted to do nursing or was there a careers...?

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JA: I'll tell you the story o' that, this couple, this Mr and Mrs McLelland that owned the..I explained about the farm, the fields? Well she was Canadian, and she was always, behind her back they used to call her Lady Bountiful, ye know she had that...it was quite a new experience for her to be married to a laird, and to have money and to sort of...and every Christmas, she presented the outer...well like dad who had, was a kind of...well he wasny really a servant.

TG: Tenants?

JA: Sorry?

TG: Were they tenants?

JA: Tenants that's the word...with gifts. And the one year she gave me, snow white and the seven dwarves, and they were all Chad Valley, each individual wee person, and then snow white in her blue and white, you know, oh gorgeous.

TG: Oh I bet you thought you were the bee's knees.

JA: Oh wait till you hear what I did! Mum and dad went round...had always to go round to the byre at night to milk the cows, and they left me in the house, I don't know how old I'd be, nine or ten-ish maybe? Maybe younger. And when they come

back [?] cut all the the arms and legs off the dolls, and I had the boxes, the boxes set up like wee beds, the lids made, and the wee...and I had them all in their beds, and this was me lookin' after them. And mum said that was the first indication she got, she said I was positive then what you would do for the rest o' your life.

TG: You were a carer.

JA: I was a carer. In spite o'...and she said I don't know why I was so pleased because I sat up the whole night stitching these damn things back on again!

TG: So did you go to do your training did you just go to Nithbank or how does that work in those days?

JA: The thing was, I left school at fifteen, must have been fifteen a bit ye know, my birthday's in February and I suppose it was the summer holidays, and I stayed at home until my sixteenth birthday and then I went to Castle Douglas they took me in at Castle Douglas Hospital.

TG: Really? And did you stay there?

JA: Uh huh.

TG: Where did you stay?

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JA: There was staff accommodation.

TG: I never knew that.

JA: Oh aye there was. Was a busy wee hospital, it was in these days you know, they did everything but anyway, I stayed there, and my role in life was, I was the first...the youngest nurse to join the hospital staff when National Health Service came in.

TG: Really!

JA: I was just sixteen, just turned sixteen.

TG: So that was right at the beginning?

JA: Right at the beginning.

TG: So the older people in the staff would find it difficult perhaps, or were they thrilled to bits?

JA: Well, I don't know, it's just like now you were so glad o' a job, you know, and that. But oh it was tough oh it was tough. I mean we had to do the...well there was a

ward maid but she couldny do everything I mean we had to do the cleaning, and it was a Miss Graham was the matron, she was a bundle o' fun!

TG: They all seem to have a stereotye of a matron!

JA: It was gettin' back to primary school when the old yin was, ye know! It was terrible! It was but, but the trainin' was so good, and I didny appreciate it till I went tae do my training. But, she was a bit ferocious...no, well, there was two sisters there was three sisters. There was Sister Beattie, Sister Barr, who was the chemist's daughter at Castle Douglas, do you remember Barr the Chemist?

TG: I remember Barr's.

JA: She went abroad...Kathleen, Kathleen Barr. There was Sister oh dear now it's just gone...Colquhoun.

TG: Colquhoun?

JA: Colquhoun, was the night sister, and apparently the first day I started...first night, no first day I started, you couldn't get black shoes in these days, I mean you just couldny get anything, and mum had managed to get me a pair o' red shoes, and had sort o' dyed them as best she could. But of course the red was comin' through in patches well there was a nurse on, Howitson was her surname, canny remember first name, and she said her and sister Colquhoun had spent the

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night laughing at me, you know because I was on on day duty, because of these red patches comin' through the shoes. Oh but I got my own back!

TG: You'd be quite young and in a new job and away from home. That was not very nice.

JA: And I mean well, we got one...half a day a week off, but we got one weekend a month off, and I used to cycle from Castle Douglas Hospital back to Kippford, it was great goin' right doon Cragair Hill, and but coming back was a bit of a dreich. And but I did that, I was there two years. But, I was going to tell you something else...oh yes, Sister Barr, Kathleen Barr was very enthusiastic, she was one o' those...I wouldny say dedicated nurses, she probably was, but she liked to make sure that you had every experience you see?

TG: How good was that.

JA: A girl came in as an emergency from Wigtownshire, and she'd been across from Ireland, wi' the potato pickers, and she went into labour. Of course naebody probably knew that she was pregnant, but, this is what happened, and the ambulance went for her, and the ambulance driver managed to phone...he would

stop at a call box, and say they would never make it to Dumfries, they would have to come in to Castle Douglas. So they brought her into Castle Douglas, and Kathleen Barr was insistent that I would go in and watch this birth.

TG: At sixteen?

JA: At sixteen. And added to that it was a breach birth. And halfway through it I gave in, I mean I just...I would hae been on the floor. And do you know I never did my midwifery.

TG: Did you not? She put you off forever.

JA: She put me off completely.

TG: Aw, that was a pity.

JA: Aye it was a shame, because that's what overenthusiasm does. You know I was far too young for the experience.

TG: All she could see was an opportunity, and she didn't think about the whole story.

JA: No she didn't. But by the time I got to the Infirmary, or Nithbank, when I was eighteen, I had given injections, given enemas, I had passed [?] tubes, I had been in the theatre when they had taken oot tonsils, appendicitis, hernias! You name it! I knew a' the sequence o' the instruments, and what we did and it didny matter if ye were on night duty, now there was a very famous...well known I

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should say no' famous, surgeon in Dumfries. I've had long enough tae think about this, I canny remember his name offhand, and he was the surgeon for St Joseph's College, and he used to bring any of the boys or the fathers or anybody that fell ill, and needed an operation, he wouldny go to the infirmary across the road, no no no, he had to bring them to Castle Douglas. Ye see he trusted the nurses there better to look after them...I wish I could remember his name. But anyway, he used to bring...and he did everything, you know it wouldny matter what you were there for he did it! And, Dr Donald was the anaesthetist, now he was a well-known doctor in Castle Douglas aye. And when I was there, they did the tonsils, and of course deep underneath I'm quite soft, you know, and it was always the kids and they had them all lined up you know? And we kept tellin' them, "You'll get ice-cream and jelly tonight," the poor wee souls, we didny tell them what they were gettin' beforehand! And, (are you all right about this because sometimes I rant on!) and we took...well they walked in, and that but, and then after about six times bein' in the theatre, and of course I used to cuddle them before they went in, and then one day I went...nearly, I was nearly away, and they caught me, and then, the next time...oh I wish I could remember this man's name! He was big burly! And I was standing there and I could just feel myself you know going..."Get that girl out of my sight!" and d'you know another thing he used to do, if the trays o' instruments were sittin' and

he was in a bad mood he would kick...knock them over. And we'd to take them a' away and re-sterilise them. But anyway, so in the end Dr Donald got me, and he said, "Nurse Thomson, do you really want to be a nurse?" And I said, "Oh yes it's the thing I really really...," he said, "Well you can't do it now, just now, because yer faintin' far too quickly you know you're just keelin'," and he said, "You'll never stay the pace," but he says, "I'll tell you what I'll do, for the next sessions, quite a few, you'll stand right beside me at the anaesthetic machine, and he says I'll talk you through it, and you'll not look at the children, you'll turn your back on them," and he says, "and then we'll try and gradually..." And d'you know, that was the secret.

TG: What a very clever man.

JA: That was the secret. I went to Dumfries, and of course it was three years training. Can I boast a wee bit?

TG: Yes. Please do.

JA: I got...I won the best practical nurse for the three years of our training. Well I got the books and a medal, and, I stayed on for another year, in theatre.

TG: To do theatre training?

JA: To do theatre work, loved it. And it was Mary McCartney now I don't know if that rings a bell but she's a Castle Douglas...she was, dead now. I keep sayin' that too often!

TG: It's sad it goes with the age doesn't it?

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JA: Mary had trained in Cumberland, but had come to the Infirmary. I think she was Castle Douglas first and then got sort o' promoted tae one o' the senior sisters in theatre and it was her that asked me tae stay in theatre for the year. And she was there, and she was very good to me. The only time I fell foul o' Mary was, she had a septic thumb one day, and there was a big...this was when I was trained I mean, I'm jumpin' a bit, and so I couldny do it...ye know she couldny do it, and I was a staff nurse by that time, and of course they said, "You'll have to take the cases today," and it was Mr Neilson, I don't know if you know...

TG: I know that name.

JA: Johnny Neilson, he was well known surgeon...well known for his...bad temper, and no patience wi' the staff! I was terrified, I was terrified! However, I went and thought about it, I thought the best way to handle this is to tell him, I have never done this before. And you know, I know the operation and I know the...but I've never actually stood in the sister's place. So, I told him, and he said, "Well thank goodness for that, that one person can at least be honest!" So I started, and it was a gallbladder. And of course as he took it oot it burst and a' the stones went



everywhere. And he says, "Get a hold o' a pair o' forceps and get these things picked up!" And yet years after that, he joined the Antiquarian Society and of course Alex was president, and we were at every meetin' and we were on an outing one day, and I'd avoided him like the plague, because he had a certain following of staff, that thought he was wonderful, but not me, I liked Mr Beveridge, Mr Beveridge was a gentleman, you know?

TG: Yes.

JA: He was a surgeon as well, but I avoided Johnny like a plague, and then, we were on this bus outing, and there wasny terribly many of us, and I said to Alex, "I must get over this," ah says, and he says, "Well he's treasurer I've been talkin' to him for months!" And I said, "Oh I'll have to speak to him," so here, it just so happened it wasny contrived, I ended up standin' beside him, and he had the brightest blue eyes I've ever seen in a human bein', they were brilliant, and he turned and he looked at me and I said, "Mr Neilson I don't think you'll remember me, but I was one o' the nurse that trained at the infirmary," and he said, "And ye hated my guts."

TG: [Gasps and laughs]

JA: And you know, talk about the fear bein' gripped! And I said, "Well! I cannot deny it, you weren't my favourite person!" And he says, "Och I know, I knew that a lot o' the nurses just couldn't stand me."

TG: But it didn't alter his behaviour though?

JA: Not a bit.

01:07:55

TG: How strange. Too clever for his...clever at his job, but not good at people.

JA: He was, and I mean it was all for the patients, you know, he really did, he did a lot of things that...we suffered, but it was for the patient. He did a ward round up in ward two one night...[laughs], I've jumped a whole lump! He did a ward round up in ward two one night, when I was...I was actually leaving, I was going to Sick Children's in Edinburgh, but I had about three months tae put in, you know, and they decided that they would let me do temporary...I didny get any more money for it mind you! Temporary night sister, junior night sister's job. So, that meant at nine o'clock every night when we went on duty, we went right round all the wards, took the reports and any problems sister would tell us. So ward two was going like the proverbial fair, and there's about ten drips up, and the nurse, who actually won the silver medal that year, the same year as me, was standing in tears in the middle o' the ward, "I can't cope, I can't cope!" Brilliant at getting it ontae paper, I said, "Oh Mary come on, for goodness sake, let's get goin'." But it was a strain because ye don't let drips run out, you know you've got tae...it's easier nowadays but, these days ye didny, anyway, we got all the patients done, all the drips done, all sorted, and settled for

the night and lights out and all the rest o' it, when Johnny arrived to do a ward round. He'd operated of course most of the day. So, Mary..."I can't face him, I just can't face him! You'll have to do it!" I said, "Oh well fair enough," I says, "I'll no' know the names o' half the patients but I'll do my best." So, him and I and the house one went round, nothing was said, just nodded and nodded and a' the rest o' it, came to the top o' the stairs, which led down to the front door, and stopped. This was me escorting him oot o' the premises. He looked at me with his blue eyes and he said, "How do you sleep in your bed?" "Pardon sir?" "How do you sleep in your bed?" I said, "Well, I just sleep in bed." "Do you sleep bolt upright?" "No sir, I sleep flat." "Get into that ward and get all those back rests down and give the patients a good night...!" [Laughter] Give me a gun!

TG: Oh my!

JA: That's what he said but och.

TG: But that kind of authority was what...in a way you expected people in authority were like that.

JA: Well yes and I mean we accepted it, because we knew, I mean it was life and death situations in these days. I mean, they relied on you and you had to rely on them, I mean you had to make the decisions whether to call the chiefs or at what stage the patient had deteriorated or needed a drip down, you had to carry a' that burden. And when they go on about stress now aye I know jobs are stressful, but we just did it.

TG: I think the boundaries were not so defined as they are now, people are very much, "This is my job but that's not," where you were taking a lot...

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JA: No no, that's right, aye, and another thing, this business of suing, and will there be a...which is terrible, terrible.

TG: And you wouldn't have that?

JA: No, no we didn't, and I would say ninety percent o' the time the relatives were very grateful, and supported us, you know they really were. So I stayed there, I did my training and I stayed there for the year and then I went to Sick Children's in Edinburgh, which I loved, once I got over the awful noise on the wards.

TG: The noise?

JA: Aye the baby...the crying from the children, you know? And of course that was in the days when visiting was...

TG: Mums wouldn't be there with their babies?

JA: No no they were not. And I mean you just...and then you see after a few weeks ye didn't hear it, ye just didn't hear it you got used to it. But I loved it, and, I always laughed, when my two came along, and one or two o' my friends that are outside the profession, said, "Oh I'm scared stiff, I've tae take..." I remember one girl in particular, "I've to take this wee soul home, and how did you get on?" I says, "Great, I practiced on everybody else's baby!"

TG: You did a lot of practice!

JA: Even from bathing my brother when he was a baby.

TG: When he was only teensie!

JA: So aye it was like a...actually they're buildin' a new hospital now, and they talked about it...forty, fifty, it must be nearly sixty years ago when I was there.

TG: And they're only just doing it now.

JA: They're just doin' it now. It's no' even...I mean I don't know if even the plans have been drawn up, but it was Sciennes Road and it was the Royal Hospital for Sick Children.

TG: And did you stay in residence, in nursing accommodation then?

JA: Yes, oh aye, we had accommodation.

TG: And did you and a pal go or did you just go on your own?

JA: No, no, I just went and...I tell you who was the real instigator o' me doin' Sick Kids, was Betty Brown from Twynham. Did you know Betty?

00:14:13

TG: No.

JA: Betty's father had a very well known joiner shop, joiners business in Twynham.

TG: No I don't know him, no.

JA: No, she died only last year, and she was a brilliant ward sister, and like a pole, I mean she was so thin and tall, and she was another one, you know you did everything that Betty told you and... 'the Broom' they called her for a nickname, and I meant the children were first priority, no excuses, and hard hard work, hard work. But I just got so involved and the thing was I was frightened for the kids, I was frightened for the wee ones at that point, and decided that the only way to overcome the fear, was to train.

TG: Good for you.

JA: I worked it out that if you know that if I really knew what I was doin', and later on a lot of people said that was why they resisted so many of these big children's hospitals resisted bein' taken into general practice, because the staff didn't understand them, I mean they treated them like wee adults and they're not.

TG: They're not, absolutely.

JA: So that was it that was it and then I ended up...the only thing I did disappoint my parents in, I could have been a ward sister, but I preferred tae stay as a staff nurse.

TG: Hands on?

JA: Oh very much so, aye. And I knew I was getting married, I was engaged by that time so, I mean for the short, what maybe a year a year and a half it really wasn't worth it in my opinion anyway. But I think dad was a bit disappointed you know.

TG: Yes because you had done well you had got your certificates and medals and things like that and he knew that you were fit for it.

JA: That's right, uh huh. I could have, I could have, but anyway, a friend was at the Vale of Leven, now that's been...I'm so angry at them so disappointed in them! That hospital was the best in Scotland. It was...the first newly built one after the War, after the Second World War, and when I went for my interview I could not believe it. There was Royal Stewart carpeting through the nurses home, the wards were four-bedded which was just comin' out o' the Florence Nightingale wards you know? The kitchen was divided...the chefs, all the chefs had the hats and the checked trousers and tunics. The kitchen was all divided into pastry,

01:17:14

vegetables, meat you know it was a'...every different...a different appointed area. I was flabbergasted I'd never seen anything like it in my life. And the nurses wore dresses, and it was the first, I think it would be the first of the plastic aprons they had tae put on top you know?

TG: Yes.

JA: And we were colour co-ord...I look back on this and I think 'did I dream it?' you know! The nurses were colour coordinated, so that ye either had a blue uniform, lilac, green, pink, four colours aye that's right. That was yer dress, and then we still wore hats funnily enough we still wore the wee Dutch cap.

TG: Were they paper?

JA: No, oh no no, starched, oh aye starched, and we still had them. The sisters...it was very much more relaxed because it was a new hospital, and they started off by

staffing it with staff nurses, until they got...they hadn't got the training school you know organised, and they hadn't got that many patients, it was just to get it off the ground. So we were all friends, I mean, and we reckoned that when we went over everything, there were very few disciplines that one person didn't have, eyes and fever and sick children's and general...well we were all general. Midwifery, and some quite unusual things like...diseases...it's not foreign diseases.

TG: Infectious diseases?

JA: Aye, infectious diseases, but also the ones from abroad you know the big school in London specialise, aye infectious disease. Was one of us could do the whole lot.

TG: So you had lots of expertise to draw on.

JA: That's right.

TG: But that must have been wonderful to work in a place that was just so new.

JA: Oh it was.

TG: Because people would be coming to look at it.

JA: I know. And then when I heard all that recently I thought, what an absolute disaster. I've got a wild tongue and I think if I'd got hold...down there!

TG: Just to think, but again that's a long time for a hospital...and I can't imagine...it'll have deteriorated in every way.

JA: Oh it will, it will, it'll have gone down, aye.

01:20:05

TG: Och that's a pity.

JA: It is.

TG: So you were working in Vale of Leven and engaged to Alex at that point?

JA: Aye, but I was only there about...maybe a year and a half, you know? It was just the closing of my...and I never went back to nursing.

TG: You didn't?

JA: No, because David had brittle bones...has. We all have, it's something, a gene that we carry, and he had it, he had a lot of fractured legs and arms, and I felt it was unfair to any employer, because I would be off such a lot looking after him. And the other thing I felt was I had to get this child to adulthood and working, that was my...

And I was lucky 'cause I mean Alex had a really good job, and he was clever enough to hold down a good job, and I was able to stay at home. Christine thinks it's a terrible waste!

TG: Of course it's a terrible waste, but then in life you sometimes don't have all those choices, your decision's taken for you your child was most important.

JA: That's right, and I mean actually it roved right 'cause David's got a very good job in Aberdeen now, in the fishing industry, and he got his BSC Honours in the Open University, so I mean I just feel if I hadny worked with him a lot when he was young. Dr Rutherford, Harry! Said to me when we got the diagnosis through, "Now, you've two choices Mrs Anderson, you can tie him to your apron strings for the rest of your life, and his, or you could untie the apron strings and let him go as a free person." So we untied the apron strings I sweated blood!

TG: I know but then as a nurse you probably had a knowledge about how that worked.

JA: That's right, aye that's right. So there we are. And all the other stories I could fill another book for ye!

TG: That's amazing, yes. Well I've really really enjoyed this thank you so much.

JA: Anytime, anytime!

01:22:17