

Interviewees: Mary Fairley (MF)	Interviewer: Flora Burns
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FB: This is Flora Burns speaking to Mary Fairley and it is Friday the 9th January 2015. Thanks Mary for agreeing to come along and meet me and go through this interview. Can we start off just getting some idea of your background? First of all can you tell me little bit of where you were born and what your parents did?

MF: My father was a dairyman and I was born on the farm at.....my ??? sometimes closes up on me, Nethermill and we moved to Dalbeattie by the time I was five because I never went to Nethermill School. At Dalbeattie we were there for, it took me right up to age twelve and then we moved again but that time I got enrolled to go to Dumfries Academy, which was my next school.

FB: Your Dad was a dairyman you said, yes?

MF: A dairyman, yes, and for the sort of six years of the schooling that's where we lived then they later moved to Moniaive, which is on the road as it were.

FB: And that was still doing dairy work?

MF: Yes

FB: And did you ever get involved in that work at all? Was it very much your Dad's job? He went out and did it or.....

MF: During the time we were sort of at the Nethermill area it was the war years so it was all hands on deck. You know all the young men disappeared off the map altogether and large herd of cows and things it was a bit tough on Dad.

FB: And was he exempted from being in the war?

MF: Ehm?

FB: Was he exempt from fighting in the war because of farm work.

MF: Yes, and age as well because he was into his forties by that time so that, but certainly also it was job that needed to be done for...

FB: For the country.

MF :(Laughing together) Yes and it was literally all hands on deck.

FB: So what did you find yourself doing?

MF: Well I often milked the cows and from time to time very efficiently I should think. If they needed extra help on the....., my brother was completely uninterested in anything to do with farming. Give him a hammer and nails and a piece of wood and he was in heaven. So he ended up as a joiner in Lockerbie.

FB: What about your mum did she help as well?

MF: Oh yes. Well she did the dairy keeping of the actual..... where the milk was coming.... all sterilised and everything had to be spotlessly clean. She did that. She occasionally helped with the actual milking but mainly getting the milk into canisters and getting them the lorry came to take the milk away every morning but....

FB: So it was a real partnership then in terms of the job they were doin.

MF: It was.

FB: So you were well grounded in terms of skills for, well I suppose you could have gone into that line of work yourself. I often think nowadays that children don't get that same level of responsibility do they, to do jobs like you were being asked to do at a fairly early age.

MF: Yes, that's right.

FB: Your Mum and Dad were both busy. You would have been involved in keeping the house clean and tidy and meals on the table and that kind of thing as well.

FB: But you were a scholar. You did well at school.

MF: I did well at school. Yes

FB: So how did you manage to get to Dumfries Academy cos they were very selective in those days I believe?

5 mins

MF: Because of the headmaster of Nethermill school decided that no way was I going anywhere else. Told my mother that. So it....

FB: So he must have spotted a talent. Did you have to pass any kind of entrance exam?

MF: Oh yes.

FB: Yes. Right but there had to be a decision made about putting you forward for the exam

MF: That's right and naturally the uniform and all that sort of thing but he was quite adamant and he told my mother that that was where I was to go which was a ten mile bus journey every morning (Laughing) and back in the afternoon.

FB: Because there were hostels in those days. Some people stayed in?

MF: There was a boys' hostel as far as I remember, but for the life of me I can't remember whether there was a girls' one.

FB: I think there was but ... you are right maybe it was because it was mainly boys that were getting into the school maybe there weren't an awful lot of girls.

MF: That's right.

FB: But I have spoken to other people who have been at the school at that time and they have been in the hostels. They stayed because they travelled, for example from Sanquhar.

MF: Yes that's right, oh yes they came from all over, up from Lockerbie area as well.

FB: And how did you feel about coming out from your.... because ten miles was quite a distance in those days. It's nothing now is it?

MF: It was quite a distance but nothing now.

FB: But this was your own little wee area and travelling to the town, the big town of Dumfries every day.

MF: Hmm.

FB: How did you cope?

MF: I did have an aunt in Dumfries where I went for my lunch.

FB: OK.

MF: At least I did for the first two years or thereabouts, but then I eventually decided to have lunch with others in the school, which probably was not as good as what my aunt was producing, but that I can't remember. (Laughing together)

FB: So did you enjoy your time at the Academy?

MF: I did.

FB: Yes. What did you particularly enjoy?

MF: Just the general education in a way. It eh....

FB: What were the key subjects in those days?

MF: Maths, English, French, History, Geography, PE, eh..... No I just enjoyed it. Having been to the much smaller schools probably I felt it a bit awe inspiring to begin with, but I soon made friends and eh...it eh...no I really enjoyed it very much.

FB: Any members of staff still stay in your mind as being interesting?

MF: Hmm. There was a geography teacher. I can't remember his name now, Gibson, I think. I liked the History classes and eh... my sons met up. I don't know whether they were actually taught by him but actually he came to Edinburgh and was teaching at the school my sons were at. (Laughing)

FB: Small world, the world of teaching isn't it?

MF: Absolutely. No it was just a bit.... to begin with presumably I was a bit shy and wouldn't come forward. The French teacher we had was actually a Frenchman, and quite why he was there during the war I don't know. But he was and when you were pronouncing your words and things he would turn to me and say, 'Mary, you say it because the class will listen to you' because I had a roll burr. (Laughing)

FB: I know what you mean so you could that with your r.

MF: Just listen while Mary does that. I don't want to do that. Don't do that. I don't want to be picked out. (Laughing together) But it was a very noticeable burr that I had at that time. The border burr they call it.

FB: So you were at the Academy. You enjoyed it. You did well. You stayed on.

MF: Six years

FB: Right, six years right so you got your Highers and then it must have been decisions about what you were going to do next.

10mins

MF: Well I wanted to do nursing and my mother wanted me to do the.... she did not suggest university but I think she would have liked me to have done that. But because I helped older women in the Red Cross they were all interested in nursing and a nursing career.

FB: So you were still at school when you met, when you got involved with the Red Cross?

MF: In my sixth year.

FB: In your sixth year so how did you get involved?

MF: Because my school friend was one of the girls that I had made friends with and she was in the Red Cross as well. It was only a very short time really, just more or less after the end of the war.

FB: So what kind of things were you doing?

MF: Well, just rolling bandages and things. It was a bit of a bore but there were...you got people who came in who needed help to walk or what not. It was only on a Saturday morning, never for any length of time because otherwise I was at school during the day the week days.

FB: Who ...Were you encouraged to do that? I know you said your friend did it.

MF: I think we just both went along to see what it was about.

FB: So these were people who had been wounded in the war coming back was it?

MF: Some of them must have been. It is a hazy thing because it was not for a very long period and then I decided I was going to do nursing and my mother said, 'Oh no you don't want to do' but I said, 'Yes, I do.'

FB: Had anybody else in the family been a nurse?

MF: Yes I had an aunt.

FB: Right ok

MF: One of my father's sisters was a nurse and ... she... that was the only other person and certainly not from my mother's side of the family at all. It was from my father's.

FB: So your mum would have preferred you going to university?

MF: Oh much more.

FB: And then doing what? Did she see you being a teacher?

MF: Being a teacher presumably would be in her mind.

FB: You only got so many options. Didn't you?

MF: You did. There weren't all that many options around. No, quite right. And then was a decision was made that.... I wrote to, I applied to the various hospitals Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and.... what was the other one?

FB: Edinburgh?

MF: It was the first one because I knew this little family that had been evacuated with us and....

FB: Evacuated from Edinburgh?

MF: That's right, whereas with Glasgow, Aberdeen and these places I didn't know anybody. I thought it would be good to go somewhere where I actually knew somebody. So when I put in the applications, I got it back to say they didn't... they would keep my name on their lists but they couldn't take me because I wasn't nineteen.

FB: That was the magic age for startin training.

MF: That's right. That's why.... when I ended up in Moat Brae.

FB: Your family that was evacuated from Edinburgh did they stay with you? Did your Mum and Dad have to look after them?

MF: No they were.....

FB: In the community

MF: Yes, well, no the mother got a job as a sort of a house... a housekeeper for one of the more moneyed families and she had two children with her who went to Nethermill with me at that time

during the war years and it ...wasas I say, we just got friendly with them and kept in touch when they went back home again.

FB: So Dumfries at that time didn't do any training then. It had to be....

MF: There was a Dumfries hospital but I didn't want to go Dumfries. I wanted to do something different

FB: So you did have that notion of you had been at school, you got your Highers and you were, I don't say maybe keen to leave the region, but had notions go further afield.

MF: Further afield, yes.

FB: Was that how young folk kind of viewed prospects in those days? Do you think that was fairly typical if you got into education?

MF: It's a.... I really don't know.

FB: What about your friends were they similarly minded?

MF: Well no, none of them went in for nursing. They usually ended up typing for some office or other.

FB: So you were kind of unusual for the times?

MF: That's right for the time, yes, yes.

FB: Did your Mum and Dad worry about you going further afield?

15mins

MF: Well, I don't know. Dad would just say yes if that's what you want go and do it sort of thing. But my mother was more ambitious in a way for me and eh..... that, I said that but I stuck to my guns and I said I wanted to do nursing but then this business of doing this when I left school at eighteen and then having to wait until I am nineteen.

FB: It feels a long time at that age doesn't it?

MF: It does.

FB: When in reality it's not it's not too bad. So you had this year to fill in so that's when Moat Brae comes into the picture?

MF: That's right.

FB: And how do you get there then?

MF: Well, it was because somebody knew Miss Cochrane, who was the matron that my mother had, maybe my mother had said to some people at the Women's Institute or something, this is what Mary wanted to do. I really don't know how it all came about, but they knew Miss Cochrane and that they would contact her and say that they knew of a girl just left school, and I went for the interview and ... so that was me in Moat Brae.

FB: Did Miss Cochrane interview you?

MF: Oh yes. Oh yes.

FB: Yes. What did she ask you? Can you remember the kind of questions you were asked?

MF: Not really I have a funny feeling, but I might be wrong about it, is that my mother came with me.

FB: Could well have been.

MF: Yes, yes and she... Miss Cochrane had a nice spaniel dog and I think I was more interested in the spaniel dog than what they were saying to me. It would just lie there flapping its tail. (Laughing)

Anyway they accepted me as a trainee and I was there until, well my nineteenth birthday. My birthday is in September but it was January 4th that I actually started at Edinburgh Royal 1947.

FB: 1947 OK and what kind of training did you think you got at Moat Brae? It was a private hospital.

MF: Oh it was private. Oh yes, oh yes. Well...

FB: What were you allowed to do for example?

(Background noise of rain on the conservatory roof)

MF: Well, let's put it mostly menial tasks but the women, who were there would show me how to make a proper hospital bed, how to help a patient to dress actually to feed them if they, you know, if they were unable to feed themselves. There were a lot of elderly people. Just nursing techniques

and things like that. So I, when I reached the age of nineteen it ... went to Edinburgh. A lot of the things I had to go over again but in a bigger more expansive way.

FB: So you've said there's mainly elderly patients at that time.

MF: Yes

FB: So there wasn't a great range of conditions or ailments?

MF: There was children who had their tonsils out because Moat Brae had a little operating theatre.

FB: That's right. Ahah.

MF: That was another little part of it.

FB: And was that parents paying for that operation there or was it a help out with the local...

MF: Parents.

FB: And were you conscious of that?

MF: Very much so. Oh yes the people who were there were paying for the attention they got. It was ...I had that year of working in this more select rural... it stood me quite in good stead when I went to actually to train in a big ward with thirty odd patients.

20mins

FB: And did you ever feel in that year of training oh I have made the wrong decision or did anything set you back?

MF: Never, never.

FB: Was there anything in that case that confirmed yes this is definitely what I want to do.

MF: Yes, definitely want to do. Of course it's a four year course. As I said, but by the time I had finished the four years I had met the man who I was going to marry and... but he.... we were going to get married in the spring of 194... 1951 and when he announced that to his parents, his sister and he had a sister and she said, 'Oh don't do that. I am pregnant and I want to be at your wedding.' (Laughing) So we had to put off our wedding date. Well I could see her point she would want to be at her brother's wedding andso I had this period where I had ... well I was back home again and that was when I went back to Moat Brae. Over that period of months. The thing was although we were planning to marry in the spring Margaret was going to have the baby, I think in the beginning of May. It wasn't just the actual time. So we put it off. And then in his office that he worked in at that time if he was not married, his time was his own sort of thing. He couldn't take his holidays from May to September, because that was more or less school holiday times and only the married men could get that time off. If he wasn't married then he was..... (Laughing)

FB: He got the short straw.

MF: He got the short straw.

FB: So what did your husband do?

MF: He was in Life Assurance.

FB: Right .OK. The other thing I didn't catch or didn't ask you was, what and, forgive me because I can't remember the different kinds of nursing qualifications you could get, what were you?

MF: Only general nursing.

FB: General nursing. Right.

MF: I didn't want to do a midwifery course or anything like that.

FB: Right. So you know after Moat Brae, and even during the course of your training you didn't want to specialise in anything in particular you just wanted do general nursing?

MF: No, as I say having met and going to get married was sort of the main thing in 1951 that would be.

FB: Quite a push to get married wasn't there?

MF: Yes it was.

FB: But you did your training in Edinburgh and there was no encouragement for you to stay on in Edinburgh was there? Would you have been able to get a job, a permanent job in Edinburgh?

MF: Oh, I think so. Yes, oh yes. I mean there were nursing homes and such like or you could have gone on and done another course of the specialising, things like that, but as it was I just wanted something to fill in the space of time until we get married. Then when I got married, I sort of

dithered whether I should get work, but my husband didn't want me to go out to work, wanted me to be there at the house at home. So ... I befriended my elderly next door neighbour who was a couple, there was two of them, a man and a woman in their seventies, eighties. I don't know whether they were married or not. I never found out. She referred to herself as Miss Bailey so there you are. Anyway I suddenly found out that, when actually her partner died, and she was on her own except for a cleaner coming in but once a week, and I realised she wasn't cooking for herself.

25mins

So I was next door cooking a meal for my husband and what not and pregnant by that time. So I used to take in her meals. I did put her laundry into laundry bags so's that the laundry could be taken away then she would make a great fuss of my eldest son she used to ...when he was about four or five she used to take him for afternoon tea as opposed to other elderly ladies. (Laughing) But he must have responded to it and thought it was just wonderful, just wonderful.

FB: It is just the way elderly people should be included. Isn't it?

MF: And then when she died..... I realised that people were beginning to talk about carers ... you know how there's the people.....caring groups and agents nowadays but there wasn't then so between her daily woman and myself we kept this lady in her own home until she died. And her family when she died, she had a cousin and his wife who did come and visit from time to time as well, they were breaking up the house and what not and they rang my doorbell one day and said, 'Right we have taken all that we want. Help yourself to what's left.' My husband had just bought this house so we furnished it very well (Chuckling). That was by the time... the old lady ...I had my three boys I think. I have twin boys and Roddy is one of them and an elder son I thought that would be fine and found myself pregnant again and it was a little girl I got. My next door neighbour said it should have been another boy, should have been another boy but I have got three boys already I want a change. (Laughing together)

FB: So you were kept fairly busy then what with a growing family and ...

MF: Still taking her, her lunch and what not and her evening meal.

FB: If I can just take you back to Moat Brae though for.... When you came back for that second stint, how long were you there?

MF: Almost ...well.... end of January to September.

FB: OK and how did it feel coming back for a second tour of duty?

MF: I don't remember feeling very... that it was just much the same as I had remembered in the earlier.... although I was more senior. It wasn't a case of being told what to do things, but I could tell the junior nurses what to do.(Laughing)

FB: So you got a bit of relief from the menial tasks?

MF: Yes, that's right. Yes. And it was a different matron. It was a Miss Cochrane the first time and a Miss Park.

FB: Miss Park

MF: Hmm.

FB: Was it always the case they were never married?

MF: I don't know. I don't know what came in between or before or after. I never knew. These were just the two matrons I knew.

FB: Again any stories about the staff or patients from either of these stays?

MF: From either of them, no not really. It was.....

FB: After Iain saw you yesterday he said don't forget to ask Mary about the Duchess of Buccleuch.

MF: Oh yes, my story about the Duchess of Buccleuch. Well, this was in my first ... we had just more or less probably been there for six months or something. Anyway my being one of the junior nurses in the place at lunch time Matron always served lunches. She would go down to the kitchens and serve the lunches.

30 mins

And they had three, housemaids who did the house cleaning and what have you. If they were having lunch, it was my duty to answer the door bell if it rang over the lunch period. And this day a ping at

the bell I went to the door and there was this lady standing at the foot of the steps, an enormous bunch of flowers over her arm and a basket of peaches in the other one. She said to me, 'Is Matron around?' I said, 'Yes she is serving lunches but come in.' I thought I should really take the flowers from her cause she was really..... but I didn't. I said, 'Just take a seat and I will go and tell Matron that you are here.' So I took her name. Duchess of Buccleuch. Ahh! (Laughing). And I went down these stairs I don't know if I even slid down the banister. Ohh (Still laughing). And into the kitchen and said to Miss Cochrane that the Duchess of Buccleuch has just come in and she said, 'Oh bother', handed the serving spoon to the cook and went off up the stairs.

FB: So was she there visiting another patient then?

MF: No, no. To my knowledge that she only came to see the matron and as I say she had this the peaches were lovely. (Both laughing)

FB: They were shared out?

MF: Well, they were taken to the kitchen actually for the staff to use. And the flowers, of course, Miss Cochrane would have in her room. And it was rather a taken aback eighteen year old.

FB: So where was the Matron's room in those days?

MF: It was in the.... just off the hallway.

FB: Right.

MF: They had the male ward was the first one, ward as you came in and there was four beds in it. And then there was another door and there was six beds in it, into the bay window. And matron's room was the next door round in the octagonal hallway and then there was a little corridor that went out to the little operating theatre.

FB: Yea. Ahah. It is hard for me to envisage it cos all I have known of the house now is.....

MF: Taken apart.

FB: If you'll have even noticed that when you visited yesterday all these extra bits have been taken out

MF: Taken out, yes.

FB: It is hard and well other visitors who have worked there have said that it is hard to envisage sometimes just exactly where a room was or corridor was.

MF: Yes, that's right. I was finding that quite difficult. I mean I could see and, of course, the lovely idea of the sliding doors when it was a big manor house, you know.

FB: Ahah. It has the potential to be a beautiful house again. I must admit.

MF: It is, it is indeed.

FB: Do you remember the garden at all?

MF: Yea. I remember him and I can almost put a face to him but can't remember his name.

FB: That was Mr Brack.

MF: No that's not the name. I think I would have would have reminded that.

FB: It could have been somebody different at the time you were....

MF: It could have been two different people you see. There could have been one when I first started and one when I came back five... four years later.

FB: Ahah. But was the garden really well kept in those?

MF: It was, oh yes, oh yes.

FB: I mean it's under reasonable control at the moment in terms of ... so that you can see the features certainly.... potential to be a beautiful space again.

MF: Hmm, that's right. To me it was a sort of magic thing. You came in off the street into this house and you could go out the back and you were in the country. You suddenly left all these buildings behind you and you were in the country, as though you had flown to the change in the.....

FB: I still get that same sense today when you go to the back of the house and you are looking right across up to the Southern Uplands and there is hardly anything.

MF: There's hardly a house or even a plume of smoke.

FB: That's right.

MF: There's just nothing. It is just sort of... really... it is like walking into something magic.

FB: It's... it is a nice spot but it has got the potential to be a spectacular spot again I think once it gets laid out.

35mins

MF: Yes, yes.

FB: So any other stories about any other members of staff, or events or funny things?

MF: (Very hesitant) It a...No,not really. ... as I said, the first year I was just left school, you know, and it was a bit awesome andthe second time round naturally I had a bit more upper grade shall we say but... no I was glad that I had experience of one, and then finishing my training and filling in time until we could arrange our wedding.

FB: And did you have any view about private health care and state....

MF: No, not really, no, no.

FB: You know the people you were meeting were people... I mean, my impression is that Dumfries has very, very fond memories of Moat Brae, people who worked there and people were treated there as well....but it was the prerogative of those who could afford it.

MF: Yes, yes. It was almost like what you have nowadays, the care homes. Quite a lot of elderly people would be in, and in for quite long periods of time.

FB: We've picked that up. Yes, I mean one woman apparently was there for nearly twenty odd years.

MF: Really.

FB: Hmm. It must have been after your time.

MF: It must have been after my time. Yes, it was funny it was one morning, I was lying thinking about you coming and speaking to people about Moat Brae that it ... a lot of the people were there for not just simple appendix removal or something like that which they would be there for about ten days and gone it was people there that had been there for ages and ages and ages. In fact I took my bouquet of flowers after my wedding to an elderly lady who was in the ward. She was very sweet and very kind. I took her my flowers.

FB: Ah nice gesture.

MF: So it was the first we thing we did after the.... we left Moniaive to go down to... I think we went to London ... stopping off at various places on the way down. I had never been to London. We drove down. My husband loved his cars.

FB: Right. So you were quite an outgoing character then for.... and not really typical, I would say, of especially young girls, probably at that time in terms of setting off.

MF: At that time no. Really in a way Moat Brae, the first time I was very junior, you know, but having spent another four years doing the training with girls of your own the majority were around the same age. We did have two in our group who had been in the army. Trained nurses....they worked there.

FB: And how did you find living in Edinburgh having been brought up in a fairly rural area?

MF: That's right well I think being in the community of nursing for four years it was the camaraderie of my friends rather I missed than..... I knew my way around Edinburgh by that time at least parts of it where my friends lived. Two friends that we used to ... come down to Moniaive with me and got spoiled stupid by my mother. (Laughing) So they said. One of them her mother had actually died so my mother felt very sorry for her and made a fuss of her.

FB: And how did you travel backwards and forwards?

MF: Buses.

FB: The bus and how long did it take you in those days?

MF: Forever, it sometimes felt.

FB: I think it still takes forever doesn't it? (Laughing)

40 mins

MF: I have one story about the buses though, which was myself and one of my friends, the one whose mother had died when I think she was fifteen. A cancer victim I gathered at the time but it ... we were both on night duty she was in a ward and I was working in A & E at that time.....that night. It was a Saturday night, that's right and then we had three days off, three nights off I should say and

...you weren't allowed to wear your uniform outside but if we were going to get down here to Moniaive at a reasonable time and not hang around waiting for buses. The bus at half past nine left the main place down beyond Princes Street and came up to Tollcross at half past nine, that bus was the one we must get. So, as I say, we were not allowed to go out of hospital without wearing our uniform but we snaffled our coats and baggage in the ward and when you had done the round with your ward sister at half past eight we then ran to where, at least I did, ran to where I had hidden my coat and my bag, pulled it over the top of the uniform, tied a scarf round so you couldn't see the white collar. (Laughing) We got down and got on the bus. Sort of fell into a seat you see and I was sort of dropping off to sleep. The bus was nice and warm and comfortable. When I suddenly heard my friend saying, 'I've had enough of this'. I thought what she is on about. Then I sort of woke up with one eye and there she was standing up and she was lecturing the two ladies that were sitting behind us and what they had been saying 'Look at those two up dancing all night' and I can't remember all the things they were saying about the youth of today. 'Couldn't even keep awake at 9 o'clock in the morning. Partying and such like. What was the youth coming to' and so on. Well I heard her say, 'The youth of today there are some who do that but that is not what I do' and she said 'There are other things that young people are doing these days and they are not always out enjoying themselves. She says I enjoy a night out as much as any other young person but there is another side to it.

FB: Good for her. Nothing changes though does it young people getting a bad report.

MF: I know. She went on to say there other things that young people are doing these days. And she said my friend and I are trained nurses or training as nurses or whatever and my friend has been in A & E all night. 'Ever been in A&E on a Saturday night? It's a real party.' You know and she was the charge nurse in a male ward who took in victims that were being kept in the male ones there. Her ward was the receiving end of the.... She said, 'That has been my job that's what we have been doing tonight. We have not been partying.' (Clapping her hands) And the bus all applauded.

FB :(Laughing together) Well done.

MF: She said they were going on and on and on about the youth of today. (Still chuckling)

FB: You can just hear them can't ye?

MF: They must have been a bit mortified when they actually... oh that was the other thing she undid her coat she had a uniform on. Proof.

FB: I like it. Oh that's good. (Still laughing).

MF: You don't take everything as it seems. There can be another story behind it. Can't there?

FB: That's right. That's true today as well sometimes. However, OK, so you come back to Moat Brae and then you get married and you have four children.

45mins

MF: I had five.

FB: You had five children, right.

MF: Four pregnancies but five children.

FB: Right.

MF: Three sons and two daughters, in that order.

FB: So you lost your last daughter was it?

MF: No, as I say, three sons and two daughters, there was five of them.

FB: Oh right, ok, ok. Did you go back to nursin at all?

MF: No

FB: No that was...

MF: Well, that's not true.

FB: I know you did your caring bit as well. I mean that's a nice story as well...

MF: But then there's bringing up five children you see.

FB: Absolutely.

MF: And when my last daughter went to school I thought I would like to do something that ... other than just be there for them coming home from school sort of thing. My husband didn't back me up.

He was rather keen that I should just stay at home and do what was necessary there. I said I would like to go back. I thought maybe I could get a job in a dentist's assistant, something like that. And there was one day I was reading The Scotsman and running down my fingers down the ... and it said 'Matron Wanted for George Watson's Ladies College' and I thought wow that's the job for me. My daughters were at George Watson's Ladies College. It just ... well Anne would be just started and Alison would be Primary 3. And I put in an application and got a letter back to say that they wanted to interview me and I landed the job.

FB: Which would have suited you really well cos you had the school holidays and everything.

MF: I had the school holidays also I didn't have to pay anybody to take them to school or anything like that cos I was going too. And eventually George Watson's Ladies College folded up and the girls joined the boys where my boys had been at school as well. They grumbled, at least the twins did, at one point, it would happen, they said, when we're just leaving, sixth formers you know. But the two girls had to face up to classes of boys in their class so....as I say they they had no matron at the boys' school if anybody, and I know from experience if anybody fell and bumped their heads or whatever just parents were phoned and you took them home whereas they got better care when I was in ... I would call the parents and say so and so is not well can you come and get them sort of thing. Well, I loved it. I really enjoyed my work amongst these youngsters it was just really great.

FB: Absolutely. And did you ever think of ... did you ever want to come back to Dumfries and Galloway?

MF: Well, of course, we did you see. We bought this house that's here. This that I am sitting in was our holiday cottage.

FB: Right, ok. So you maintained that contact?

MF: Well it was eventually my husband said one day that was ... going on holiday... his, the Fairley family comes from Cockburnspath on the East Coast

FB: Yep know where you are.

MF: You know where I am that's where my father-in-law came from and they had a little cabin in the harbour there, right and I would say, I doubt if it was as large as this room. And it had two bedrooms tiny little bedrooms, a biggish living room with a big alcove in it for a double bed. Once the family got to being ... well the girls really never went to it very much. Alison ... Anne wasn't even born even thought about, but my mother-in-law ...my father-in-law had died quite some years beforehand and my mother-in-law came on holidays with us, but this little hut you couldn't call it much more than that. To put the three boys into one small room and granny came with us so she had to have the other small room and we had the bed in the alcove. As I was saying to somebody of course when Alison came along I just had to put her in a drawer. I don't know how old she was at the time and she said you didn't shut it did ye? (Laughing) I suppose we did shut it (Voice fading with laughter.)

50mins

FB: It wasn't unusual to do that was it? Even, ... I've heard, I have heard my own mother talkin about doin that as well with one of my younger brothers when he kinda arrived unexpectedly. (Both laughing) So you retained the contact with the region then in terms of....

MF: That's right my parents were still down here, you see.

FB: That was a good way of....

MF: They were at that time at the house at the end of Craigdarroch Road, Lodge, Craigdarroch house, I should say, and Dad did the garden. That was when he retired. He used to go down and potter around in the garden of the... forgotten the name of the people. So that's how we came back here. My husband decided that taking five kids on holiday and granny we had to have something a bit bigger. I think he had spoken to it in front of my parents and my mother phoned up one day to say that there was a house just outside the village, that was going up for sale might be just what we were looking for, so we came down and saw it and he bought it. So all my children have experienced living in this house.

FB: And they know about where you come from and your background?

MF: That's right.

FB: And did any of your family go into nursing?

MF: No

FB: No

MF: None of them did. No, my two girls, one is a works in a prison and the other is a psychologist. She's up in Aberdeen and has a team of ... that goes out and about and she's just sort of climbed up the ladder recently.

FB: And was your Mum pleased with how you turned out? You said she was ambitious for ye.

MF: Oh yes. Well ... I think eventually she just went along with me but she loved having her grandchildren round her and that sort of thing. My brother, as I say, is a joiner in Lockerbie or was he's retired now and my sister married and lives in Dumfries.

FB: They stayed local.

MF: They stayed local. They stayed local, yes.

FB: Is there anything else, Mary that you think we should know about in terms of the Moat Brae connection. I am taking you back to that although I found the other bits interesting as well.

MF: In terms of Moat Brae yes you must. What has Roddy put down here for me? Thinks his mother is going daft. Well, I've got the memory of the statue in the garden too. Wheeling patients out into the garden.

FB: There was statue in the garden when you were there? The same one that's in the house now?

MF: That I don't know. To be honest I didn't recognise it as such but it's a hazy memory.

FB: Aha. OK because the whole history of the statue at times is a bit hazy as well. Personally I think there was another statue that was badly vandalised.

MF: Yes that's what Isomething like that at the back of my mind as well.

FB: But you distinctly remember a statue in the garden when you were a nurse?

55mins

MF: I am almost certain but I wouldn't make it an absolute positive.

FB: No, but it's just when we're talkin to other people, you know, eventually you can start piecing all this bits together.

MF: Piecing together.

FB: It's a reminder as well when you do meet anybody else to ask, you know, what their recollection is but that kinda chimes with the other bits I have picked up.

MF: That's right, that's right. Seeing you know how the statue is in the house just now it does clearly ring a bell as being the one that was there but it is very hazy.

FB: You don't have any photographs?

MF: I don't. I didn't have a camera in those days.

FB: Cos that's the other thing we're keen to...

MF: The only photographs I have of Moat Brae is a group of us standing at the front door and there's one of me. I think it is after I had done my training and I am in the garden somewhere and someone's taken my photograph in my uniform. But I can get duplicates of these.

FB: That would be good, good yes.

MF: I think I sent one to the.... of the group naming the nurses in it.

FB: It's not the one that's in here is it? (Showing the photograph in *Moat Brae Memories*)

MF: I don't know. Yes, it could be in there. Yes. No it's not that one. It's not that photograph.

FB: I don't think there's another group one in here.

MF: I don't think there is. No. Is there another booklet, is there?

FB: No, that's the only one done. That was our first attempt at, you know, pulling together or getting together people's memories and trying to, you know... we did inherit a little album of photographs when we bought the house from Loreburn.

MF: I did know ... meet up with Elizabeth Progin. She was there and Muirhead. I remember her but...

FB: Did you get a copy of?

MF: Yes, I have it.

FB: I know, if you have got photographs then I think it would be.. if you can get them or send them to us and we'll copy them and I'll make absolutely make sure you get them back.

MF: Yes.

FB: But personally I think the statue we have got is a fairly recent version.

MF: Yes, I think it is a recent version. It didn't stir any strong, oh I have seen that before

FB: That's interesting. Something we can look at.

MF: And this is the operating theatre and I would say that's Miss Cochrane standing there. I might be wrong.

FB: Right, Mary, I think I we have covered a fair bit of ground there. Thank you very much at's very interesting just to hear how you got started and how it has influenced your later life to a certain extent as well. So thanks very much.

MF: The fact of buying this house and coming back to Moniaive again where my children all came back for their holidays

FB: Good to keep the connection up.

MF: That's right and then Roddy was.... well the family were all getting married and going off on their own ways and Roddy was house hunting at one point. His Dad said you know he said maybe we should offer him [REDACTED] and they said by this time they were all getting married and going off on their own ways and so, you know, he offered and it and here he is.

FB: It's good to keep it in the family

MF: Yes, that's right.