

Interviewee: Mabel Forteath (MF)	Interviewer: Moira Taylor (MT)
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TITLE	DG32.3.1.1 Moira Taylor interviewing Mabel Forteath.
REGION	Moniaive.
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	Farmlife; school trips; worklife; travelling/cycling.
COUNTY	Dumfries and Galloway.
TOWN	Moniaive.
DATE OF INTERVIEW	16 April 2014.
INTERVIEWER	Moira Taylor.
YEAR RANGE	2000-
SUMMARY	Mabel was born and brought up in a remote rural part of Dumfries and Galloway; she was broke-hearted when she had to leave for Moniaive itself. She talks about her life before the move including getting a cup of cocoa and heat at the fire when she got to school in the winter. She discusses the extra chores she had to do as her mother did not keep good health, and the actual farmwork with the sheep. She would be put into the giant bags of wool that had been sheared from the sheep to tramp it down. She loved attending traditional dances and being shown films, both at the town Institution. She talks about her time as a domestic at a school and the prank played on her when she turned 21 during her time there.

MT: This is Moira Taylor in Moniaive Sixteenth of April Twenty fourteen, interviewing Mabel Forteath. Could you tell me something about your days at school here in the village?

MF: Well ah didny really like school very much, I didn't no, I wasn't very clever. We used to walk down from [?] tae the, what we used the lodge around the back road tae get the bus in the morning, sometimes the driver had tae come and look for us because we were dilly-dallying down the road! Then we walked tae school, in the winter months, when it was snowy and that, we had tae change intae wir shoes sand shoes, and they always had a cup o' cocoa ready for us! There was a great big open fire and it was lovely. Well that's a long long time ago. Then we come back and we'd tae walk up that road, you know, a' weathers. Sometimes we wereny even, couldny get out because o' the snow and that, so we had a day off school.

MT: *[Laughs]* That would have suited you!

MF: And when we used tae go down the road, we used to meet the postman, pushin' his bicycle, in they days, and the forestry workers when the forestry took it

over, and they used to always joke and laugh at this and say, "Oh, no school today kids, the school's burnt down!" Kidding on of course.

MT: What were the teachers like that you remember?

MF: They were very good, very good.

MT: Strict?

MF: Mmh, then they were, yeah.

MT: What did you have to do?

MF: It was that long ago I can't remember we had this nice wee desk, and there was the three classrooms. I'm afraid ah didn't really enjoy school.

MT: Not even playtime?

MF: Yeah, ah did.

MT: What sort of things did you do in the playground?

MF: Oh just sort o' play and you know, and ah can always remember it was the baker's oven across the road, and we used tae, used tae could go across and know the penny buns used to be a penny. I can still remember, in the summer

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well we had wir trips in the summer and there used tae be five buses, and every bus had somebody to look after us forby the driver, [we'd the] balloons and we used tae go to Largs and Troon and Ayr and we loved it. And the buses were always full o' kids.

MT: So were these school trips?

MF: Mm hmm.

MT: And one person to look after a whole bus-load?

MF: Mm hmm.

MT: Wow.

MF: Mrs. Marchbank was one.

MT: Was she a teacher or...?

MF: No.

MT: No.

MF: Ah canny remember.

MT: And what about your family at home, were you part of a big family?

MF: Well we had six of us, there was six of us, four boys and two girls.

MT: What did your dad do?

MF: He was a shepherd. And ah used tae love to go out in the lambin' time, ye know and help and that? In the summertime, we had a cow and when the cow was in calf we used tae have tae go down tae Ingleston Farm tae get wir milk with the tin can, used to love that a walk down tae Ingliston you know where I mean?

MT: Mm hmm.

MF: Then back up. In schooldays on the way home from school we used to go intae what we ca'd the cow[shed] we had a name for every field you know when, you had to go into the cow field and let the cow out 'cause she was always waiting for us to take her up for milkin' time. Then, we took her back down again to save dad and that comin' down for her, never thought anything of that and loved it, loved it.

MT: Did you help in other ways around the farm?

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MF: Well we always had oor jobs in the house for mum because she doesny keep all that well, and I used to love when it was sheep-shearin' time. Used tae roll up the wool, put in the bag ye know the big bags [hang] and of course, dad or somebody used tae put us in for tae tramp it down, oh ah loved that, ah loved it!

MT: Being inside the bag?

MF: Aye! Trampin' the wool down, ye know, this was years ago it was huge bags. We always put enough in before we got in like! And we used tae help dad wi' the hay and that as well when he used tae have tae cut the hay and that and we used tae scythe it, wi' the scythe and aw I used tae love that. Ah miss it so much because we were up at [?] when ah got married and had a family and that, and when we came down here oh ah was just so heartbroken, really was, took me two years.

MT: Really, to settle?

MF: Tae get over that ah mean ah knew everybody in the village, but oh no it was a funny feelin' ye know ah felt as if ah was alone ye know what I mean I don't know, 'cause ah was always myself up there ye known and ah loved it, used to go away long walks when the boys were wee, amongst the brackens and they used tae play

hide and seek and I used tae go and kid on ye known when ah couldn't find them. We'd the pups little pups as well, oh I'd a lovely time, and ah do miss it to this day.

MT: It's a very physical life isn't it very active?

MF: Mm hmm.

MT: When you went on the trips did you have any special friends you went with?

MF: As a schoolgirl you mean?

MT: Aye.

MF: Not really no not really. Just sat beside wha'ever, but it was old fashioned buses and that if you can remember them?

MT: Oh yes!

MF: And we used to always have wir packed lunch and evrythin' like that but I used tae love goin' tae Troon and that, just the seaside, aye.

MT: Did you get away with your mum and dad at all did you ever go on holidays?

MF: Ah went on ma own to Lockerbie that's where ma relatives always stayed there, ah used tae but ah always got homesick. We used tae have visitors comin'

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up you know or come on a Sunday to visit ma mum and dad, on a Sunday and we used tae a' have tea at teatime and we had tae wait until they had finished and of course we daren't speak we didn't laugh or, got that look ye know!

MT: Did you do that to your children as well?

MF: Well, sometimes yeah! When I tell my boys you know, aboot my childhood, they just can't take it in, you know what I mean?

MT: It's like another world to people isn't it?

MF: It is it is.

MT: So Sunday would have been busy if you went to church as well.

MF: Mm hmm, we went to Sunday school every Sun' we walked from the [?] tae Kirkland to the church and back.

MT: That's Glencairn isn't it?

MF: Mm. Sunday school.

MT: And were you in a choir or anything like that? Thinking about the church what about weddings and things were they big celebrations when you were younger?

MF: Mm hmm.

MT: What can you remember about?

MF: Well ah was married in Glencairn. Ma brother, ma youngest brother. Unfortunately there is only two of us left, me and ma brother he stays up in Inchinnan. Ah'm actually goin' up there on Saturday tae stay for a week, 'cause he's on his own now y'know? So, I always make a point o' goin' up twice a year, 'cause he's no' really fit to come down here, he'll be eighty-one this year, no, wait a minute ... eighty two he'll be eighty-two I'm eight years younger than him.

MT: So were you the baby of the family?

MF: No, ma brother, we're the middle two. Ma young brother Jim he died of an accident, [Drew] lived in Liverpool, he died o' cancer. (And I don't know whether ah want tae say this on this or not).

MT: No, just whatever you're comfortable with, it's fine. So really there was a lot of family but did you have grandparents, and d'you remember anything about them?

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MF: Ah only remember ma mum's mum ma granny in Lockerbie uh huh. I didn't know ma grandpa. And ah didn't know ma dad's side at all.

MT: So no family from that side at all? Did he come from somewhere else or was he...?

MF: Well he come from Newton Stewart way, ma dad, but, didn't know much about his family.

MT: 'Cause it's not that far away is it, distance-wise?

MF: But ye see tae go back up tae where ah was born and bred it's no' the same place. It's not and I try to reminisce this and that and what we used tae do as kids but, it's not there anymore it's all grown up wi trees an that. Fir trees and...

MT: In a way that's kind o' nice it's gone back to nature, that's quite a nice thing and it must be difficult when you haven't got somebody who remembers that, to reminisce with you. It's quite a difficult thing for you did you ever do work outside the home did you go out to work?

MF: [Ah went tae work in] Crawfordton. Crawfordton big school aye.

MT: What did you do there?

MF: Oh just domestic work.

MT: No such thing as just, very important job.

MF: We used to know every boys name in that school. Ah used to know the first names like ye know? Some o' them were very very polite and you know. Then of course it changed, girls and, children that went [as a day ye know] people.

MT: Did they sleep there was it a residential school?

MF: No tae start with they always lived in the boys but there was some day pupils, well it was Mr. Dale and he was a very strict headmaster. And [oh] to see it now it's a shame, they're rebuildin' it, it was a lovely big school ye know, stonework.

MT: It must have been a lot for to clean though, a lot of work then.

MF: Well it was mostly the dinin' room ah did ye know breakfast and lunch and dinner at night, a long day, but ah did enjoy it and ye know? And we used tae have some good laughs. Ah never forget when ah was twenty-one, it was just at the end o' the start o' the school holidays, and of course what did they do to me? They put me in a bath o' cold water, with ma clothes on. [Laughs] They carried me down the stairs, and struggled with me anyway 'cause ah mean ah couldn't

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stop laughin', and along this corridor to the bathroom, put me intae this water with ma clothes on. Luckily ah had more clothes 'cause we'd taken them all home ye know and just ready tae pop on. And wi' a' the laughin' and that, do you remember Mr. Grozier, the schoolteacher up there? He's an old man, well he heard a' this laughin' and of course he looked out 'is study and when 'e saw us you know, laughin' it was hilarious. He never spoke tae us for ages ah think he was so disgusted! [Laughs] Ah still had ma clothes and that on but I'm sure he must have thought we'd been at the drink, and we hadn't!

MT: How did you get home with your soaking wet clothes?

MF: No ah had a change, ah had a change 'cause. Ah mean ah cycled up, and cycled home, after that.

MT: You wouldn't forget that in a hurry.

MF: No, it always sticks in ma mind. and unfortunately, ah never see the rest o' the girls now. Well the cook she's not here anymore. Ah saw Linda she stayed in New Abbey, but ah've not seen her for years and years.

MT: What a time you must have had!

MF: Oh aye it was, it was the flowers and that were lovely the daffodils and, no it's, and that wee chapel lovely wee chapel that is inside, that's where the boys always went on a Sunday.

MT: Goodness. Did you actually celebrate your Twenty-first did you go out or have a party?

MF: No no' really no. Ah canny really remember much about it. Ah know ah celebrated ma Fiftieth in the George, 'cause ah workit in the George at that time.

MT: Oh right. What was that like celebrating your Fiftieth?

MF: Well ah worked in the kitchen with the chef and that and of course, they were tryin' their best to get me drunk. Fortunately ah did like a drink so ah was quite prone tae, ye know, but no it was a good what ah can remember of it was good, ye know, just one or two people like, some o' the village people that ah knew and that no? It's a good laugh.

MT: Sounds like it! Well I'm really going to pick your brains now, what d'you remember about the wartime years here?

MF: Not much no, see we were up in the hills and you know ah don't remember much about that at all apart from this wee shop, and it was a wee sweetie shop, and we had wir tokens ye know fir tae go and get wir sweeties, that's about all. Ah remember the Coronation, you know, this trailer or I don't know whether it

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was a tractor or whatever took us round the village and that some o' the school kids and that on the Coronation day.

MT: Dressed up or?

MF: I think we might have been but nuh, I can't remember.

MT: Did anyone have a television in the village to watch it? No.

MF: No, ah remember Paul Richardson used to stay in where Wendy stays now, he was the electrician, and he used tae always have a, on a Saturday night, have a picture show, in the Institute, I used tae go tae that, it was like a film. And I had tae cycle home after that.

MT: Wish they still did that!

MF: And ah loved tae dance ye know there was lots o' dances in the Institute ye know, and accordion bands and that. And now when they say, 'Oh goin' to the dance,' it's not a dance, no' like it used tae be ye never hear o' it unless ye go away up north now.

MT: So it's traditional dances you did? Waltz and things like that?

MF: Well, mm hmm, and eightsome reels and things like that ah loved it.

MT: A lot of fun. Did you ever go into Dumfries for entertainment?

MF: Well sometimes to the Assembly Rooms it used to be the old time dancin' in there wi' ma friends or that. But that doesn't happen any more either.

MT: And what about, you mentioned the electrician in the village, were there lots of shops here then?

MF: Mmh.

MT: What sort of businesses?

MF: Well there was the drapers across fae the Craigdarroch, electrician, the grocer's shop next to that where they're rebuildin' it now. A' the outside ah don't know if somebody must have bought it. Then there was McHarris which is Graham's now that was a thingmy-merchant, a whatdyecallit...fir hen feed and a' that. That's where the garage is it was in there that's the grain store in there. And there was a wee shoe shop next to that where Charlie is, there was the butchers, used tae be a bank across fae the Institute, it's still there, and there used tae be a post office, a watchmaker, where Julie's is now, Julie's hairdressing was, and Callander's. And as ah say that wee sweetie shop. Aye, canny think o' any more, there used to be two garages, one garage down where, at the end o' the village,

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where whasisname the joiner stays, ye know whasisname can't remember, it's gone, there, and that's where the school bus used tae come and Rolls Royce Taxis in these days, yeah! If we had a taxi tae go tae there used tae be a dramatic society, and we used tae get Jimmy Anderson remember Marjory that lived down there? Her dad used tae drive [Jim Clark] used tae drive this Rolls Royce up and over tae come back down tae the dramatic society we used tae always [?] night, used tae be great, but, nothing now.

MT: Where was the dramatic society held?

MF: In the Institute. Used tae be Sam Todd, Marjory, ah canny mind whae else, ah canny remember whae else at that time.

MT: Did you join in or did you just like to go?

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MF: No I just liked tae watch. But it was good.

MT: You said that your mum didn't keep in good health?

MF: No she had a lot o' trouble wi' her back and that.

MT: So did you end up doing a lot of jobs in the house?

MF: yep, lookin' after the family, cookin' and.

MT: Did you each have your own jobs or didn't it work like that?

MF: No I had it all to do cooking and washing and housework and, 'cause, well, ah would be left school then, ah was lookin' after ma brother and dad.

MT: And then you get married and do all the same again?

MF: Mm! Ah didn't get married until ah was Twenty-five, Nineteen sixty-six, that's when ah got married. Had two boys, have two boys.

MT: And were you still living outwith the village then when you got married?

MF: Mm hmm.

MT: So did your man do the same, shepherding?

MF: We stayed up at [Glen?] you know where Kenny [Ayrton] stays now? Well that's where we took up house there, that was two houses then.

MT: So are your sons away or do they stay nearby?

MF: No they're with me. You'll know Steven the tree-surgeon?

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MT: Aye.

MF: That's Steven.

MT: That's one of yours!

MF: Youngest one, and Brian works tae Robert Wilson up at [?].

MT: And what about obviously you must have missed the animals when you moved down did you ever have dogs here or?

MF: Collie dogs uh huh. No I used tae love it up there. Go ye know [helpin' wi] the lambin'. Ah would plan tae do a bakin' ye know, then he would say to me, "See yon sheep up yonder in the hill, ye wouldny mind goin' and?" Whatever ah loved it of course, ah said, "Oh ah was gonna be bakin'," [?] Ah need to get her down because she must o' lambed early and she'd twins and so ah loved that 'cause ah was born amongst it ye know what ah mean? So that was the bakin' out o' the [?] where it was more grass and that, loved it. Ah used tae have tae go along tae the farm and feed the ones at night time, oh ah didny like that bit very much 'cause, used tae always say, "Och the dogs'll be barkin' if there's anything about," anyway ah loved it gettin' in amongst the [?], fightin' over whae was tae get the lambs and that, but no it was fine, ah did miss it so much and efter we left up there, Jim didny have any job, then Robert asked him if he'd come and work the lambin', of course he was there ever since wasn't he, and that's him didny want tae [?] tae Robert, and ah used tae walk up, in the lambin' time and that and just, ye know ah was just oh ah couldny for the tears were there ye know what ah mean?

MT: Really?

MF: But oh ah've got over it now but still miss it all, 'cause I'm no' workin' now and too much time on ma hands.

MT: You're busy though you seem to do stuff in the village?

MF: Well, I'm wi' the Evergreen and the rural and things like that.

MT: And didn't you used to drive the bus?

MF: The schoolbus for Peter, aye.

MT: I thought that I thought I'd seen you whizzing about on the bus.

MF: Aye, that's all gone of course retired and, I don't do any drivin' at all nowadays, ah don't have to, 'cause ah've got ma bus pass, ah mean ah can go away up to Perth for nothin', hmm with ma bus pass!

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MT: Fantastic.

MF: It is fantastic, aye.

MT: Is there anything else you wanted to tell me before I?

MF: I think that's about it.

MT: It's dragging through the memories isn't it, aye?

MF: Mm hmm!

MT: I'll turn that off just now.

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