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INTERVIEWER: Isabelle Gow

RESIDENT: Wilma Twidale

INTERVIEWER: Wilma, could you tell me a little bit about your early days in Lochmaben and childhood?

MRS TWIDALE: Well, I was born at 28 Barras so I've kind of come back home to live, which was my grandmother's house, because my mum and dad were living with her at the time. So, that's where I was born. Early days, we moved to Welldale Place very soon after I was born and that was where my early memories are as a very small child, in Welldale Place. I can remember sitting on the doorstep as a very little girl, you know, I would sit there and folk would come by and talk to me.

INTERVIEWER: As they did in those days aye.

MRS TWIDALE: There was one old lady who lived in Lochmaben, she was known as Paidy, but I don't know what her right name was, she a Mrs Watson I think? And she would be going for her pension, I'm guessing as it was one day a week and every week when she came by she came and talked to me and gave me a sweetie. It was a conversation lozenge. Do you remember them?

INTERVIEWER: No, for your throat was it?

MRS TWIDALE: No, no they were flat sweeties with a little motto or something on them.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, a bit like lovehearts?

MRS TWIDALE: Yes but they were oblong or square and had writing on them and every week she would give me this conversation lozenge and she had it held in her hand, not very clean I don't think but I ate it and enjoyed it! So we lived there and then my brother was born, Edgar and then Johnny, then Nancy quite a long time later. My dad worked at Somerville's the bakers, which was on Queens Street. I need to tell you about my dad. My brother Edgar was born then my brother Johnny, then there was a big space and Nancy came along, but my dad worked at Somerville's the bakers. Now my dad was the youngest of his family and there were nine of them and he was only thirteen when his father died. So he was meant for the bank, that was going to be his career but he had to leave school because his mother had nobody else, and he was apprenticed at the bakers, so that was how he got there. So when I was quite young, my dad took a shop, we had a shop in Bruce Street, a bakers shop and he didn't drive my dad so he did his deliveries with a – I don't know if you will remember those ice cream things with bikes? Well it was a square box like that and it opened up with shelves and that is how he did his deliveries. And so, we were there he was there for a while and then he got the shop in the High Street, which is the café now, The Village

Fayre, and that was our shop and we were there for a wee while, but the people we rented it off were going to do wonders to the house and never did and the house got really too small for us and I think too the war was just coming, I mean I don't know but looking back things were becoming quite difficult and so he closed the shop and went to work in Lockerbie, for Curries which was a bakery well Mr Currie had been a rep for a flower firm and he'd opened up this shop and he came and asked him if he could work, so he went there as a foreman and we moved up to Mossvale, which was just being built, that was in 1938. So we were there, well I got married from there, so we were there a long time really.

Then well, I went to school in Lochmaben, I can remember my first day at school very clearly. My Aunt took me; she did not take me until about 10 o'clock. I don't know why. She took me at 10 o'clock, faced with a classroom of children, most of whom I knew vaguely. The teacher said where would you like to sit? I could see Moira McGhie who lived near us and was a friend and I would like to sit beside Moira. The girl who was sitting beside her was shifted out I'm sure that didn't make a very good feeling, however it was okay. So I came up through Lochmaben school and then when it was time to change I went to Dumfries for some reason I chose to go to the High School, I think it was my mother really who suggested it, although I probably should have gone to the Academy, but anyway I went to the High School and I enjoyed it there, It was good.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get from Lochmaben to the High School?

MRS TWIDALE: Bus, service bus every day. You got a season ticket, which you was supplied from the Education Authority and well I made a lot of friends at school I suppose. When I finished at school, I went on to a well it was called a, what was it called? A commercial school a business school really. Which was on Irish Street, the DuBeer School. I went there, and learnt the skills and when I finished after I had started to work, I still went several evenings a week to teach, because they asked me to, so I did that for a wee while. But when I started to work, I got a job in the Royal Insurance Company in Dumfries which was on Buccleuch Street, quite a well-known insurance company at the time. But there was only the Manager and me, because the men weren't back from the war, so there was just the two of us, but we seemed to manage okay and then somebody did come back, a Mr Robertson and he joined us and then there was the three of us then so I did everything really in that place and well I was there until I got married. I met Jim at the church, he was stationed at Halleaths and he came in to the choir and I was in the choir, so I can remember coming home one Sunday morning and saying to my mother, oh there was an awfully nice wee soul why I thought that but I did, and so he came and sang in the choir that was at St Margaret's of course. Then he disappeared. I didn't know where he'd gone, and then suddenly about a year later I would imagine, he suddenly appeared back. He'd been posted, and then he was sent back, so after he came back, one evening service it was, after the service we were coming out the door together and I think everyone else was away and he said, "Would you like to go for coffee at Crolla's?" So that's what we did and that how we met and how it all started. And then their whole camp was posted up to Elgin so our contact was phone and letters, but

anyway we eventually got married in 1950. In Lochmaben in St Margaret's church, and we have got the two children, Jean and then we had Jamie, and we have just celebrated our Diamond wedding, which is a great thing isn't it? I think we've had a really happy life and enjoyed it all.

INTERVIEWER: You gave up your work and got married?

MRS TWIDALE: Well you had to insurance companies didn't employ married women but I remember them saying to me, and I said, "Well I will have to leave have to leave", but they said they would have made an exception, but I had to say I was going away to Elgin, they contacted the place there but it never came to anything.

INTERVIEWER: No, and you didn't go to Elgin after all?

MRS TWIDALE: Yes I did I went up there, but we didn't live in Elgin, the camp was in Elgin, we lived in a place called Burghead which is about eight miles out, on the coast, it was lovely and oh before we went, I don't know how you'll get on up there, they are awful clannish and suspicious of folk. Well I couldn't have found a better place to live, they were lovely and they just took us to their hearts, we were very happy, so much so if when Jim came out of the Army, if there had been work and houses we would have stayed. Well, there wasn't, but we made some lovely friends, Jean was born up there you see, she was actually born in Forres because that is where the hospital was, we were there for , well she was nearly a year old when we came home. But the folk up there were great and eventually we ended up moving to New Elgin, which is just beside Elgin, and stayed for a very brief time with a gentleman who lived on his own. We didn't know why, but his wife had gone off and left him, and we found out why he was an alcoholic, so we were only there for about three months and we came home on leave and I said to Jim we need to find somewhere else before I go back. So we went to live with this maiden lady on her own, she and her mother had lived in this house, after her mother had died, she divided her house in two, a made a downstairs flat and an upstairs flat. We had the downstairs flat and oh she was a gem, she really was and she loved that child and her brother and wife lived next door, they all just completely spoiled her, they made an awful lot of her. Now, I am saying we had the downstairs flat, we had no water, no running water, in the backyard there was a washhouse and outside the washhouse where was a tap and that was my water supply. But there was a toilet, again it was outside, but it was a flush toilet, which a lot of them didnae have. So I had to carry all the water in house and I didnae think anything about it, young and strong. But I mean it wasn't a drawback, a lot of the folk didnae have water, at least I had a tap in the yard. Quite a number of people in Burghead had to go to a pump on the street to get water that is what it was like.

INTERVIEWER: Reminiscent of this Winter

MRS TWIDALE: We didn't get the snow, because we were right on the coast we got very little snow. But the first Winter we were there we got married when we came back from our honeymoon, we were going up to Elgin it was the last

day of November and I had never been further north than Glasgow really. And oh it was wonderful the journey, it was absolutely super all through the mountains and that with snow on the ground when we arrived at Elgin station there was an army pick up to pick us up and it was snowing, so that was my welcome there and we got quite full of snow that weekend, we hardly ever saw snow again the whole time we were there. I had my baby and all the time I had her as a baby there I don't remember a day when I couldn't hang washing out.

INTERVIEWER: Oh gosh, and in those days it was nappies, it was the towelling nappies.

MRS TWIDALE: It rained very little. I don't remember it ever being very wet and if we got snow it just went. It was a lovely place to live, really it was, because it had a beautiful beach which stretched for miles right to Findhorn a great big bay, it was lovely, and there was another part behind the back shore which was a bit rougher but nice. And one thing I do remember about being there was we always went for a walk in the evening and there was this great excitement and everybody was coming up to the headlands and it was a school of dolphins, dozens and dozens, just going out but we never saw them again.
I saw them when I went to Canada when I saw them in a pool. But that was different.

INTERVIEWER: So you had good memories.

MRS TWIDALE: We left there in 1952, Jim demobbed from the Army, 1952 and we came back to Lochmaben we got allocated a house actually because we put our names in as soon as we got married so we got allocated a house just after he was demobbed really, and I think we got into it about November, in Annandale Crescent and so we lived there and Jamie was born when we were there and we lived there for quite a while and then a couple round the corner wanted to exchange their house and they had a bigger house than us, so we exchanged with them, and we lived in that house near Queen Street right at this end for four years, and then we were looking for a house, and this came on the market, we'd looked for, we tried for another in Princes Street actually but we didn't get it, but we got this and in the end I think we did better, because it is a nice house, quieter and its nice and we've lived here since 1963.

INTERVIEWER: It's a long time and you did some work in the doctor's surgery as well didn't you?

MRS TWIDALE: Yes, it kind started when I lived in Annandale Crescent, one Winter I had a really bad dose of bronchitis it was my own fault Isabelle because I knew I had this cough and I knew I wasn't right and I didn't go to the Doctors. You know what you were like, I'm still the same, but when I was young I was worse, and one morning when I woke up, it must have been the Christmas holidays because the kids were at home and I woke up and there was this note beside the bed from Jim saying, "I'm phoning the Doctor and asking him to call". So Dr Jack Wilson duly came and he was attending me and during the course of this he said to me, "How would you feel about doing a

wee bit of typing for me?" I had been actually helping out at McJerrrow and Stevenson, not all the time, now and again, they would phone and say come in and give us a hand. He knew this, and said to me, "I don't want you travelling on the bus for the rest of the Winter." So I said, "Well I don't have a typewriter." He said "Well no, I'll bring you mine." So he brought me his wee portable and I did a wee bit of typing for him and that was how it started.

INTERVIEWER: For his books as well?

MRS TWIDALE: Yes, well yes it wasn't so much well I think I gave you some of the history too, but some of it was medical stuff and then oh well a good number of years later I was living up here when they decided to buy that house and build the surgery between them and he sort of came and said to me would you be interested? I was working by then, I had got, I was working at the Cheese Factory at Lockerbie in the office there and they had come and asked me and I was with them for two years, it wasn't great, it was okay, but it wasn't a very nice place to work. The folk in the factory were fine; it was somebody we had in the office that caused problems. Anyway, I had been there two years and he came and said that and I said yes I would be interested, so eventually I was asked, well it has to be advertised of course so I had to apply and I went and started in the surgery in 1970, and was there for twenty two years.

INTERVIEWER: A long time.

MRS TWIDALE: I mean I never even thought about that when I went, but twenty two years later and I was still there. So, and that was my ideal job. It really was.

INTERVIEWER: Meeting lots of people.

MRS TWIDALE: It was the job I had always sort of wanted and you were with people and felt you were making a difference, so I did that. So I retired in 1992, and that's me I've been retired for all that time. I can't believe it.

INTERVIEWER: Time files, but you do your art, singing and...

MRS TWIDALE: We mean, I never have a problem filling the days, from the time I retired things just start coming my way that I wanted to do, I go to my art class now, I sing in the choir, I'm an elder of the church, a I have the Guild, I read for the blind.

INTERVIEWER: Oh you do that as well, very good.

MRS TWIDALE: Once a fortnight. But I haven't been since the New Year as I haven't been well, hopefully I'm going this week, that's in Dumfries and what else do I do? I love doing crosswords.

INTERVIEWER: And you've got a lovely collection of owls.

MRS TWIDALE: Oh yes, my owls just kind of, don't know thought I'd been given one in a present and I was in the chemist one day and I saw this one.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes.

MRS TWIDALE: It's a Royal Albert and I just fancied it, and I bought it, and that was the start and now.

INTERVIEWER: How many have you got?

MRS TWIDALE: I think they hatch out when I'm not looking, people keep buying me them.

INTERVIEWER: Well that's the thing.

MRS TWIDALE: And really I'm running out of space.

INTERVIEWER: You must have about what 200?

MRS TWIDALE: I've got more than 200.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes.

MRS TWIDALE: This is my latest acquisition.

INTERVIEWER: Oh my goodness.

MRS TWIDALE: My granddaughter brought me that from Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: Oh lovely.

MRS TWIDALE: And it is made of marble, feel the weight...

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes it is heavy, and it's lovely it's beautifully carved...

MRS TWIDALE: And hasn't it got an oriental...

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes the sheen of the marble as well, that's lovely.

MRS TWIDALE: She gave me it for Christmas and she brought it from Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER: So there is never a problem of what to get you for a present.

MRS TWIDALE: Well, no I'm really running out of space I'll need to get some shelves rapidly, you start a hobby and through there I have got donkeys.

INTERVIEWER: Donkeys?

MRS TWIDALE: It was donkeys I started out to collect but sort of seemed to go out of fashion.

INTERVIEWER: I think everyone seems to like owls.

MRS TWIDALE: I think they do.

INTERVIEWER: Very good, well, thank you very much and...

MRS TWIDALE: I was going to tell you about the church because we have always, the family has always been very involved with the church. Mr father was brought up in the Barras Kirk and that united with the Victoria church and the two became St Michael's in 1921 I think, so I had grown up in it, and then after, when he was nineteen he became the assistant clerk.

INTERVIEWER: Harkness is the name isn't...yes.

MRS TWIDALE: And he did that right through and then when St Margaret's united with St Madeline's as it was it because just the Parish Kirk he was still the clerk he did it for about fifty years, so we have got a connection with those...

INTERVIEWER: A long, long connection...

MRS TWIDALE: In Lochmaben with all three we have got connections with, so we still do quite a lot in the church.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes.

MRS TWIDALE: Because we are Elders and we sing in the choir.

INTERVIEWER: I think I'm going onto different tapes here but yeah you were going to tell me about shops in Lochmaben.

MRS TWIDALE: Yeah well I counted, and I counted twenty five.

INTERVIEWER: And that was in 1942?

MRS TWIDALE: About 1942, yes and Jim wrote back and told them they obviously hadn't moved very far in Lochmaben, you know...

MR TWIDALE: It was these wee houses with a room as a shop.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, ah yes.

MRS TWIDALE: There weren't so many of them there was one there was a wee shop at Marjorie Banks, a sweetie shop, it's Rosemount Cottage or something is that's the house, it's still there now she had a sweetie shop. Now I have come down from there where would the next one be? This one across here, which was Duffs.

MR TWIDALE: Then was Tweedies...

MRS TWIDALE: No that wasn't there in 1942, then there was Tweedies the tailor and Tweedie the shoemaker at the top of the hill and do down to Princes Street , Mrs Brown who was Mrs Dixons mother, not Sheila Dixon this was Sheila's granny, she had a sweetie shop in her house, and further down

Princes Street, there was oh I forgot McGhie's up at the townhead there was McGhie's cycle shop and hardware he sold paraffin and he did batteries for radios and wireless and everything, and he sold bikes, and he had a blacksmiths place, and then down Princes Street there wasn't shops up the top of Princes Street after Mrs Brown but when you got further down there is an empty shop now next to the Crown Hotel that was Mrs King's another hardware shop and the Sandra's Bazaar was a grocers and then on the Dumfries road there was Roxburgh the grocer and then we come to the High Street, no, wait a minute we come to Castle Street first and there was Crolla's café and there was the chip shop next door, then you go to the corner where the hairdressers and that is now and that was Johnstone's the Drapers, then the Post Office, then the chemist and then you crossed over and there was another shop which was a sweetie shop, oh Teenie Dalziel's, Miss Dalziel.

INTERVIEWER: I remember someone telling me about that one.

MRS TWIDALE: It was a wooden bit built on the end of the house, all the children went there from the school, and you come further up and there was another sweetie shop, at Russell's and then you come up to the fruit shop that was Duff's as well and did they have no I think it was one big fruit shop then there was a house next to it, that's right, and then behind the Town Hall there was Maxwell and Hare the tailor, Johnnie Bell the chemist and another grocer, there were three shops there you come up Queen Street and there was Mrs Graham's, coming up the street it was on the left hand side and it was Mrs Graham's shop and that was a sweetie shop and her husband repaired the shoes, and further up there was Miss Murray's shop another sweetie shop.

INTERVIEWER: That's about four or five sweetie shops!

MRS TWIDALE: Aye, and on the other side of the road there was Jimmy Davidson's the grocers and no I've missed somebody...

INTERVIEWER: What about do you remember Scott Paul had the big shoe shop, what was the before...

MRS TWIDALE: It was a shoe shop, that was Scott's Shoe shop then it was called Scott's, but oh...

INTERVIEWER: That's a lot of shops.

MRS TWIDALE: Aye, there were a lot of shops, but I missed one and I just remembered it after I had spoken to you but it has gone out of my head again, I think...

INTERVIEWER: What was where the bank is?

MRS TWIDALE: Oh that was the Bank.

INTERVIEWER: That was the, it's still the Bank and where the café is the Village Fayre?

MRS TWIDALE: That was the one it was a bakers.

INTERVIEWER: Well yes it was a bakers, and you had the bakers for a wee while.

MRS TWIDALE: That's the one I had forgotten, was the bakers, it has been various things, we had it as a shop and after it was closed down people bought it and used it as a room, they didn't use it as a shop, it was part of the house, then some more people came and took it on. Remember that bit...[REDACTED].

INTERVIEWER: [REDACTED]

MR TWIDALE: [REDACTED]

MRS TWIDALE: [REDACTED], well he had it as a gift shop and there were people who came after him Bridges and they had it as a gift shop, then they moved to down to, what do you call the place in Derbyshire? The spa place? Oh I have forgotten, it is a well know place.

INTERVIEWER: Chatsworth I always think of in Derbyshire – I don't know?

MRS TWIDALE No...

INTERVIEWER: Baxton, Buxton?

MRS TWIDALE Buxton. And they moved there but they called their shop Burgess of Lochmaben.

INTERVIEWER: Oh really, in Buxton?

MRS TWIDALE: In Buxton.

INTERVIEWER: Oh that's interesting.

MRS TWIDALE: But they probably aren't there now.

INTERVIEWER: No, no, no. Gosh. And there wasn't anything further down after the chemist really? Towards the school, there was nothing, no?

MRS TWIDALE: No.

INTERVIEWER: But a lot of sweetie shops

MRS TWIDALE: But at one point maybe there had been.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, maybe at one point, yes.

MRS TWIDALE: I've got an old almanac somewhere and it has got them all. A lot.

INTERVIEWER: I've got a copy of an almanac. Yes. Round about Nineteen hundred.

MRS TWIDALE: Of course, it was self-sufficient because we had plumbers, we had joiners.

INTERVIEWER: Blacksmiths

MRS TWIDALE: We had blacksmiths.

INTERVIEWER: What about butchers, was there a?

MRS TWIDALE: Oh aye, there was the butchers. I forgot about the butchers. It was Browns the butcher.

INTERVIEWER: Were they always there? Opposite, eh, near the Town Hall? You know the butcher's shop there?

MRS TWIDALE: Yes. But I believe before that there was a butchers'. You know the shop on the corner, the big shop on the corner which is the hairdressers now in the precinct? Well just beyond that, in my day, it was a garage and an electrical.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. Aye.

MRS TWIDALE: That had been a butchers' shop.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. That's right. I remember, did Paisley's not have their wee electrician's shop there at one point as well?

MRS TWIDALE: Yes. Maybe.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, they did. Paisley's, Paisleys?

MRS TWIDALE: Oh, did he have it? I didn't know that.

INTERVIEWER: Was it Paisley's? I thought maybe they did. I couldn't remember.

MRS TWIDALE: My father used to do shoe repairs, in his own house. It was like a shop.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. Uh huh. Uh huh. And there'd be dressmakers as well?

MRS TWIDALE: They were in Castle Street. Aye well, I don't remember a dressmaker but there were dressmakers in Lochmaben.

INTERVIEWER: Again, when women had bought the dress and bought the material and made their own dresses, didn't they, and trimmed it themselves?

MRS TWIDALE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Gosh.

MRS TWIDALE: And there had been a fish shop at one point. I kind of think that was where the butcher's ended up. And there was also...

INTERVIEWER: Somebody said there was a slaughterhouse there as well, would it be behind the butcher's?

MRS TWIDALE: Behind the butcher's. They had their own slaughterhouse when Browns had it. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. I remember them.

MRS TWIDALE: And there was a jeweller's but I don't remember the jeweller's. It was in Queen Street.

INTERVIEWER: Gosh. And I remember where the coal merchants were, was there not a baker's shop there for a wee while, before it became the coal merchants?

MRS TWIDALE: Aye, well, I mentioned that one.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, we've talked about that one.

MRS TWIDALE: That was Somervilles where the and then it became McMichael's.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and then they had the vans as well.

MRS TWIDALE: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: And they all had the vans.

End of interview