

Interviewee: John Corrie (JC)	Interviewers: Pamela Baillie (PB); Susan Howell (SH)
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TITLE	<i>Pamela Baillie and Susan Howell interview John Corrie.</i>
REGION	<i>Dumfries and Galloway</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Family history, local history, Kirkcudbright artists' community, local figures, local artists, Kirkcudbright galleries.</i>
COUNTY	<i>Dumfries and Galloway</i>
TOWN	<i>Kirkcudbright</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>02/02/18</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Pamela Baillie and Susan Howell</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>2018</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Pamela Baillie and Susan Howell interview John Corrie about his life, family history and Kirkcudbright's artists' colony. They first discuss John's historical family background, who have been in the Kirkcudbright area for generations. Then, John talks about his relationships with some of Kirkcudbright's local artists, including Tim Jeffs, Jack Hastings and Tommy Lochhead. He shares a few anecdotes about each of these artists but particularly Jack Hastings, who was a close family friend to John after his father's early death. They also discuss the Kirkcudbright summer schools that happened annually with art students from Glasgow. They talk about art functioning as a method for recording local history, as well as the ways that art has developed and changed since the late twentieth century. Finally, they discuss local history, archaeology and tourism.</i>

John Corrie – JC; Pamela Baillie – PB; Susan Howell – SH.

Keywords: Historical Family Background; Tim Jeffs; *Have A Go*; Jack Hastings; Tommy Lochhead; Kirkcudbright Summer Schools; Changes in Art; Art as Local History; Corrie Family Emigration; Kirkcudbright Galleries; Local History; Tourism; Local Archaeology.

Historical Family Background – 0h 00m 00s

SH: So, this is recording. Susan Howell and Pam Baillie are interviewing John Corrie who lives at [REDACTED] and the date is the 2nd of February, 2018. So, we really just want to know if you have memories of the artists' community in Kirkcudbright while you were growing up, or even back to your parents' time because you've been here for many generations, haven't you?

JC: That's right, yes. We actually have our history back to 835.

PB: 835?

JC: 835.

PB: Ok.

JC: And our family actually started at Corrie village-

PB: Mmhm.

JC: -at Longtown, in Dumfriesshire. And we had twenty-five square miles of the earth way back in 1500.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And the title but we backed the wrong king and it all was given to the Maxwell family and taken away from us.

PB: Ok [*laughter*].

JC: [*laughter*] But we then came down to- to Terregles.

PB: Uhuh.

JC: And right round Terregles we had farms, and then same thing happened there. And finally, my great-great-great grandfather got so fed up with the religious fighting that he actually took the buildings down half the church in Terregles and gave one side to the catholic family and one side to the protestants and it's still like that today [*laughter*].

SH: Very much a diplomatic family.

JC: Yes, we got thrown out of there and we came down to, um, South Park, Cairniehill-

PB: Mmhm.

JC: -and the [Senwick?] estate. So yes, my family have been here for a long time. My family have been here for what, over a hundred and fifty, two hundred years. And I went to school at Kirkcudbright Academy, so very much every day was walking up and down those High Streets where the artists were living.

Tim Jeffs / *Have A Go* – 0h 02m 08s

SH: Yes, where- yeah.

JC: And of course, Timmy Jeffs actually taught for some time at Kirkcudbright Academy. I'm totally dyslexic so I got booted out of school when I was thirteen. I didn't do secondary school or university or college. But it hasn't done me too much harm.

PB: I don't think so.

JC: I can always tell the kids at school, ye know, that as long as you decide what to do and get stuck in, then that's fine. But Timmy was enormously popular at school because he was very entrepreneurial and very outspoken and always jolly, always dressed more or less the same way, with his big, brown- dark brown jacket on and his big, soft hat and a scarf round his neck. So, ye know, I didn't see much of him actually at school because I left for the last two years and went up to Edinburgh. That didn't do any good cause they decided no point in trying to teach you cause you're sick and stupid [*laughter*]... Cause they hadn't sort of worked out dyslexia then. But one of the big things that I do remember was that... Do you remember a program called, um, *Have A Go*?

PB: Oh, vaguely, yes.

JC: With Wilfred Pickles.

PB: Oh yes, yes.

JC: Well, that came to Kirkcudbright and my father, Jack Corrie, and Timmy Jeffs were two of the people who were selected and asked to go onto the radio show. It was a fantastic evening. My whole family went, of course, and we sat in the audience. And they had these big round microphones that you had to sort of move forwards to talk into and you then had to answer some questions. There was a theme tune... How did it go? 'Have a go, Joe, come on and make some dough... It costs ye nowt'... Da da da... 'So, come and have a go'.

0h 04m 08s

PB: Oh [*indecipherable*].

JC: But the person who played the piano for... Was Violet Carson, and Violet Carson was a relation of my aunt.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And she went on to be Ena Sharples in, uh...

PB: Oh.

SH: Oh really?

JC: Uh, in that soap.

SH: Coronation Street.

PB: Coronation Street, yes.

JC: But the first question was two and sixpence, then five shillings, then ten shillings, then a guinea. So, one pound, eighteen and six was the prize money. And both Timmy, who told a lot of stories about Kirkcudbright, and Father, got their one pound, eighteen and sixpence. And we then all went round to Timmy's house in the High Street and had a great old night there. I mean, he was terribly generous. He just loved people and-

PB: Can I- I'm just noticing this noise.

JC: Oh, sorry. It's me touching- it's me touching the table.

PB: I think it's maybe- yeah, so if we just address it now, that's fine and-

SH: I think it might be your cup.

PB: It might be the cup.

JC: Oh, it could be, yes.

SH: Perhaps put it... Can put it-

PB: On that, yes, yes.

SH: -on here.

PB: And just... That's fine.

JC: And it was always, ye know, an open house there and I loved- used to go into his studio where he did all his carvings and he carved pheasants, and dogs, and birds and then painted them. And they were all sold in Castle Street. Can't remember the name of his shop, but... Anyway, it was very, very popular stuff for the people coming- tourists coming to Kirkcudbright.

PB: Mm.

SH: Were there quite a lot of tourists in those days?

JC: There was. There was a lot of tourists. Mainly Glasgow and the middle o Scotland coming south, virtually no English tourists at all. But of course, they loved to see the country stuff and they bought it.

0h 06m 01s

PB: Mmhm.

JC: I have one of his paintings, cause I've tried to collect all the local artists, and he was a very good painter and sculptor and of course beautiful wood carver and carved things like the, I think, the Selkirk Grace at the Selkirk Arms.

SH: Oh yes. Yes, yes.

[*all talking at once*]

JC: I'm pretty sure that was done by Timmy.

SH: Yes, he did.

PB: Yeah, that's correct.

SH: Yes, yes.

PB: And what years were these? The 1960s?

JC: Uh...

PB: That you're talking about?

JC: 1950s.

PB: '50s?

JC: 1950s. That must- that *Have A Go* program must have been about '52 or '53 or '54.

PB: Ok, yes.

JC: Somewhere in about there.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: Because I... I had... Yes, I had just left school and... So, Timmy was very much a man of the town and he got on well with all the other artists in Kirkcudbright and they had a very good sort of coffee club that they went to, and met, and chatted, and talked. Um... So, yeah. Timmy... He was a great friend of Father's because they were very much- Father did a lot of public speaking, telling jokes... And, well, talking to everybody locally. A lot of [?], and of course Timmy was doing the same.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: So, quite often the pair of them would be on the same stage, or at the same meeting. And-

SH: That's interesting.

JC: And, ye know, come back and ask your questions and anything that you want afterwards, but beyond that, ye know, if you need to know.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: I didn't view him as family, as it were. I knew Jack Hastings much better. Jack, of course, had a greengrocer's shop in Kirkcudbright where the art shop is now, just next door to Gifford and Brown.

PB: Next door to? Isn't it where the- it's where the Chinese...

JC: That's right.

PB: That one, yeah.

JC: That one. Yeah.

PB: Next to the art shop, yeah.

JC: Yes, the other one was Ross's Grocery, wasn't it?

PB: Ross's, yes. That's right.

Jack Hastings – 0h 08m 00s

JC: Right, yeah. And um, I mean, Jack was just a lovely man. He was a very good friend of Father's but my father died very young at fifty-seven. [*creaking noise*] Sorry about this chair creaking. Um, and- but him and I then got on and almost every weekend he would take me fishing somewhere local here – fly fishing. He just absolutely loved fly fishing. And he always took a half bottle of whisky and we just threw the cork away and [*laughter*]... So, even when there weren't any fish coming up, you had a jolly good afternoon.

SH: Yeah.

JC: And, uh... Gosh, I can't think of all the lochs we went to but... And on the painting side, he was a prolific painter. He did a lot of stuff which I'd call potboilers, but there was a lot of tourists who wanted to buy something of Kirkcudbright-

PB: Yes.

JC: -Kirkcudbright Harbour, Kirkcudbright Castle or the surrounding area. But he also painted some very, very nice paintings. I think I have about thirty odd- or I had about thirty odd of his paintings. I've now sort of given them out to the grandchildren.

PB: Yeah.

JC: And our own kids. So, they're now scattered all over the world, in America and elsewhere.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: He had a car garage which he actually used as his... Where he did all his artist's drawing.

PB: Mm.

JC: And painting. And I used to go in there on many occasions. He would never do portrait. He just did views. But he came through and painted that one in the hall, which was the little farm I had in Selkirk.

PB: Mmhm, yeah.

JC: So, it's a little bit of history as well as...

SH: So, did he paint on location?

JC: Yes, he did.

SH: And in his studio?

JC: Yup, he did. He went out with his easel and...

SH: Mmhm.

JC: He did a lot of sketching.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And if we went fishing up to Loch Mannoich or up to Loch Skerrow or...

0h 10m 02s

Over to Dumfries side to, oh, the castle in the middle of a lake over there, which I can't remember at the moment, he would always get his sketching book out and while I was fishing, he'd be doing some sketching and he'd paint that right up afterwards. He lived in the cornmill, of course, just on the corner.

SH: Oh yes.

PB: Yeah.

JC: And he had a lovely family. Very sadly, one of his sons died at a very early age which hit him really hard. And then, sadly, Jack passed away much earlier than he should have done.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: So, ye know, he was just a good friend. He was quite shy in many ways. He didn't mix as much as Timmy did, who was effervesced all the time, ye know, hands were going and... Jack was a much, much, much quieter person. But he loved to talk and he loved to talk about, um... If ye went out fishing, he'd tell you all about the farms as you drove up there, and who was in them, and what was their history. So, from that point of view he was... He was just a great friend. I really did miss him after he left.

SH: Was he born and bred Kirkcudbright?

JC: Kirkcudbright.

SH: Yes.

JC: Yes, he was.

SH: Yes, yes.

JC: Yeah. And then Tommy Lochhead, I knew but I didn't know that well but I remember him. He came in, he wasn't local, and he came to stay at Kirkcudbright and got his eye on the old mill which was really derelict but Tommy, with his own pair of hands, literally redid it up to where he could- it was good enough to actually live in. I mean, virtually.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And I think, ye know, life must have been pretty tough to start with but he went on to- he became quite a famous person and very much sort of unhailed because if you read all the things that Tommy did and Tommy was, you virtually don't hear any of it, and that's why these programmes are terribly important.

Tommy Lochhead – 0h 12m 13s

PB: Mm.

JC: That you dig out all the history from the other places and put it down because once it's gone, it's gone.

SH: Yes. Why do you think he wasn't- he just-?

PB: What things do you know that maybe haven't been- ye know, aren't written down about what he did?

JC: Oh, I mean, he was such a kind person that if ye went in- I mean, he loved people just going in and watching him.

PB: Yeah.

JC: And then he would say, 'would you like a go?' and just, ye know-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -start with something very easy and very small [that flew off the dish?] and uh, but he was so patient and...

PB: Yeah.

JC: He just enjoyed it, and he enjoyed... Anyway again, he'd a big soft hat, I can remember, and a sort of bluey, bluey – I'm colour blind, also – bluey green smock that he virtually always wore. There was probably more pot on there than there was on the wheel [*laughter*]. But he never bothered and everything just- he laid it down where he'd finished and it was still there the next time you went back in again. And he... He really enjoyed talking to young people and trying to sort of bring them on in whatever they were doing.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And, uh... I have great memories of him, although he wasn't a friend like Jack Hastings was-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -but again, he was very popular in Kirkcudbright and very much mixed in with the other artists in Kirkcudbright.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And Jessie M. King and, ye know, others that were around at that time.

SH: You said he came to Kirkcudbright, um, did he come as an established artist?

JC: Uh...

SH: Can you...?

JC: I think he came as an established potter.

0h 14m 02s

SH: Potter, yes.

JC: I think it was more the pottery side-

SH: Yes, yes.

JC: -than artist. I can't ever remember seeing Tommy Lochhead painting.

PB: No, he was a potter. Yeah.

SH: Mmhm, mmhm.

JC: And he was very much on the pottery side.

PB: Yeah.

JC: But, ye know, he was certainly... Was he up in Glasgow and, um, I don't know he moved down in-

PB: I can't remember but his son, of course, Wilson, Will-

SH: Yes, yes, he-

PB: I think he's also being interviewed.

JC: Yeah, there'll be a lot of that.

PB: So, he'll be able to give that kind of information. Yeah, yeah.

JC: No, he'd long- he was just what you'd imagine a typical artist-

PB: Wild hair.

JC: Thick, wild hair that sort of floated out in the wind.

PB: White.

JC: But the other thing he did was the summer- summer schools.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And that was tremendously popular. And they would go out and he would teach painting, ye know with the easels-

PB: Mmhm.

JC: -and onsite and do views and he was... He must've made hundreds of friends because on that of course, you were getting different people at every class and different-

[loud coughing]

PB: Mmhm.

JC: So, there must be a lot of people that know him- that just knew where to find him to catch up.

PB: Yeah.

SH: Excuse me, I'm just going to get a drink.

JC: Oh, sorry.

SH: No, I'm just...

JC: Are you alright?

SH: Yeah, thank you, yeah. Please carry on.

PB: Yeah, I actually, in Geneva, there was someone, a lady, when I first went out there went out there, so it was a long time ago, and she was quite older than me and she said 'oh, I went to one of Tommy Lochhead's summer schools', ye know?

JC: Uhuh.

PB: And she had a picture, in fact, of herself and Wilson as a young boy.

JC: Oh.

PB: So, I sent that back to Wilson at the time, yes.

JC: Uhuh.

PB: Yeah. So, she was from Glasgow.

JC: Yes, yes.

PB: Yeah, and she'd come down.

JC: Didn't see much of her. She very much kept herself to herself.

PB: Uh, Mrs?

JC: Yes. Certainly-

PB: That's true. Yeah, yeah.

JC: -when he was working.

Kirkcudbright Summer Schools – 0h 16m 00s

PB: Yeah.

JC: But of course, no, I was quite small then and quite young.

PB: Yeah.

JC: But I mean, all these people were sort of held in awe when ye went to see them-

SH: Uhuh.

JC: -because they could slap this bit of pottery in the middle and turn it into the most beautiful vase. And, uh... [*creaking noise*] Oh, sorry, am I squeaking that table again? [*laughter*] I must remember this. So, and I probably haven't been able to give you terribly much, but...

SH: No, that's absolutely fascinating. One thing that's come up, most interesting, is the summer school which I find interesting. How... Can you remember how that worked? Did each artist... Bring in students?

JC: I honestly don't know.

SH: You don't know.

JC: I honestly don't know.

SH: Yes, yes.

JC: It was just one of these things that was happening there.

SH: Yes.

JC: And, ye know, those students were there. I think there was a link to Glasgow.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And that... Perhaps the university but I'm sure his son will be able to tell you more about that.

SH: Yes.

JC: That they would come down in groups, 'specially because, of course, this wonderful light that we have here in Kirkcudbright.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

SH: Yes.

JC: Which just suits the artists. But all in all, I mean the three of them were about the same generation that I knew reasonably well, and I look back and think about them and fond memories and just wish I'd... Listened a bit more to what they were saying.

SH: Saying [*laughter*].

PB: As we all, yes, do.

SH: I mean, our... Kirkcudbright is still the- well, is the artists' town and what we've been talking about is a specific period. How do you see the continuation of it? It's obviously continued with artists coming along all the time.

JC: Yes, I think the one disappointment I have, and mebbe because I'm old-fashioned and I like to see beautiful country views or beautiful village scenes, is that there are not many people doing that sort of artistry anymore.

Changes in Art – 0h 18m 10s

Now, it tends to be all modern: great splashes of paint and... I don't know whether you watch the portrait painter of the year program on the television, which is running just now and it's fascinating...

SH: Oh, yes, yes. I think I've seen old ones. Yes.

JC: They do celebrities.

SH: Yes.

JC: But, I mean... So, this week there was one guy who painted one just beautiful, perfect head and shoulders but the other one was sort of blue paint and pink paint and... I mean, the face was there but just not my... And, I mean, if you walk round this house, you'll see the history of Galloway from before the first bridge was built.

PB: Oh really?

JC: And the way the harbour looked and there are cottages there, actually, afterwards. Now, I wouldn't know about that if it wasn't for that painting.

PB: Yeah.

JC: But then, all the way on from then, you can look at other paintings. There's another painting there by, um, another chap and it's looking up the river and there's the first sailboats and first steamboats.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: So, there you've got another age, as it were, of Kirkcudbright.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: I'm sorry that nobody [*frustrated sound*] ever did anything about painting or making a story about the, uh... The anti-submarine depot that's between Kirkcudbright and Doon-

PB: Where's that?

JC: Uh, the old sawmill?

PB: Oh, that was an-? I didn't know that was an

JC: That was an anti- yeah.

PB: Oh, I didn't know that was an anti-submarine depot.

JC: Well, it was an anti-submarine base and-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -they had wooden boats of course, because you couldn't use a metal boat because it might set it off and these things would do, ye know, forty miles an hour. And they'd four of them there.

Art as Local History – 0h 20m 01s

PB: Mm.

JC: And a whole history of that is, ye know, probably just disappeared because-

PB: I thought it was an airbase at some point?

JC: No, no. It was-

PB: Anti-submarine? Interesting.

JC: If you look there's a huge slip-

PB: Ok, yeah, yeah.

JC: And they pulled them up, and there was big green sheds used to be there-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -where they did all their engineering work. And I don't know whether there's even a painting of that.

PB: Mmhm.

SH: Yes.

JC: But, ye know, David Hope-Dunbar had views done from his house by... Oh, can't remember his name. Terrible, old age. But he had about five or six different views done. Now, those views have all totally changed again because some of the woods have been cut down and they haven't. And I just hope that we get somebody back in who will go back to the old, traditional type of painting.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And just put something on record.

SH: Yes, it's a historical- as well as being a beautiful painting, it's a historical record.

JC: Absolutely.

PB: Mind you, we were looking at-

SH: Yes.

PB: -some pictures of Oppenheimer the other day-

JC: Mmhm.

PB: -and just seeing though, it was some views and it was of the Hastings cor- that little corner there.

JC: Uhuh.

PB: That are- we can see that they're actually- probably, there's some artists'...

SH: License.

JC: License.

SH: Mm.

PB: License there because houses that, ye know... Yeah, they're just not quite in the same...

SH: Yes.

PB: Place as- yeah. There's definitely- he's done a painting-

SH: Mmhm. Mm, mm.

PB: -but it's not been, I think, true to what he was seeing.

JC: Mm.

PB: So, you've got that side of things as well.

JC: Got that side. Yes, yes, ye have.

PB: Yeah. Artists have- can do what they like, can't they [*laughter*]?

JC: Well, the one I have that Timmy did was of the, uh... The Tolbooth.

PB: Ah.

JC: The Tolbooth and the cross when it was up on the...

PB: Yeah.

JC: The top of the steps there.

PB: Yes.

JC: Cause I was Persuivant in 1957 at the riding of the marches. So, I had to march up there and make this speech from the top of the stairs, and, um...

Corrie Family Emigration – 0h 22m 08s

PB: Right.

JC: And we used to ride the marches every year. But it- all the time, it's changing.

PB: Yes.

JC: And then, if you look at all the farms round about, I mean Chapel Farm, round at Redford there, as you drive towards it you see that tiny, little white building and that was where, ye know, sixty cows were milked. Now, there's six hundred being milked in massive sheds-

SH: Yes.

JC: -and that old farm has completely gone.

PB: Yeah.

JC: Even here it's all been changed.

SH: I was going to say, has your own farm changed radically in your lifetime?

JC: Yes, yes. In fact, Father and I fell out about it because I- when I left school, I came back for a year or two and... Ah, my family had emigrated all over the world, and I'm ashamed to say, I found out the other day there we had five sugar plantations in Barbados, Trinidad... Ye know, quite amazing. And when I was in the European parliament and went to the commission, there was a gorgeous lady came up to me and said, 'did you ever have relations in Barbados?' I said, 'not that I know, why?' 'Oh', she said, 'because I'm a Corrie'. Well, that's what set me off looking for the records and there I found the records-

SH: Yes.

JC: -and the actual estate where her family still are.

PB: Mm.

JC: And that's going right back, so-

SH: How interesting, yes, yes.

JC: -one of the Corries had had a local girlfriend or a local wife but *[laughter]*...

PB: Yes.

JC: But, sorry, I [diversified?] because my great-grandfather went to New Zealand and he bought a thousand acres of bush for sixpence an acre, and he sold it about three years later at a shilling an acre, cause it was developing then.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And then my father's father died when he was thirty-two, so my father took over the farm at the age of fifteen and Jack Houston from Overlaw...

0h 24m 00s

Looked after him and mentored him. So, he never got the chance. So, he said 'you must go to New Zealand'. So, I emigrated on a ten-pound fare to New Zealand and then had to stay there for, uh... Three years because that was the...

PB: That was the deal.

JC: That was the cost o your ten-pound fare. So, I joined the New Zealand Army and actually, was commissioned in New Zealand army.

SH: How interesting.

JC: I'm telling you more about me than telling you about [*laughter*]...

SH: No, it's all- it's all interesting and... Ye know, it's all...

JC: Sparks the local history.

SH: Yeah, this is going back to the ethnological department and ye know, they'll be fascinated to hear.

JC: Because Kirkcudbright people are all over the world.

SH: They're all the world.

JC: All over the world.

SH: All over the world.

PB: Yeah.

JC: I mean, we emigrated to America in 1822 and Corrieville is still there.

PB: Mm.

JC: And we keep in touch with the Corrie family there.

SH: Mmhm.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

JC: In fact, [Berkely Corrie?] is ninety-nine this... This year, I think she is.

PB: Mm.

JC: Still writing it, still broadcasting.

SH: Right.

JC: And, ye know, ye thought perhaps in those days people were- cause I said to Sandra when we got married, 'now, don't be rude to anybody a horse ride from this house because you're probably related to them' [*laughter*].

PB: [*laughter*] Yes.

JC: And then, you begin to find that you've got people in New Zealand, you've got people in the Caribbean, you've got people in America, you've got people in Canada.

PB: The Scots certainly travelled, that's for sure.

SH: Yeah, they did, indeed.

PB: Yeah.

JC: Yeah.

SH: They did, indeed.

PB: Yeah.

JC: Mm. But the artists' colony... I mean, in those days, it was literally a family.

SH: Mm.

JC: And they were a very close-knit family but *very* connected to Glasgow, because of the Glasgow School of Art boys.

SH: School of Art. Yes.

JC: And also, the ladies as well.

SH: I've got a feeling I read somewhere that it was a requirement at one point from the Glasgow School of Art to come down and do...

0h 26m 02s

JC: Something here?

SH: Something here.

JC: Uhuh.

SH: Do a summer school or something here.

JC: Ye know, I'm sure that would be so.

SH: Yes.

JC: But I think that also gave it a sort of... A name and a feeling. There's not that many resident local artists that I know of, certainly, now-

SH: Mm.

PB: Mm.

JC: -within Kirkcudbright. Uh, Maureen- Maureen's husband has done these beautiful pencil drawings. Have you seen those?

PB: Or her- her brother?

JC: Her brother, yes.

PB: Maureen Burns. Maureen Briggs of High Street Gallery.

JC: Yes.

PB: Is it- he was at school- ahead of me at school.

JC: Uhuh.

PB: Yes, I know who you mean.

JC: And-

PB: Forgotten his... Yeah.

JC: Can't remember the name. Anyway, ye know, the most- he's done the most beautiful sort of historic ones.

PB: He was the- I always sort of really, at school, admired his art. He was in sixth year when I was a first-year kind of thing.

JC: Mm.

PB: He was a great, beautiful artist at that time.

JC: Beautiful artist.

PB: And now- yeah.

SH: It sounds as if the school-

PB: I've forgotten his name.

SH: -the high school has always encouraged art. Ye know, they've always had-

PB: Yeah.

SH: -ye know, in the days when one didn't necessarily have an art department, they've usually had an art department.

JC: Oh, it was and there was great enthusiasm with linking in with these artists-

SH: Mmhm.

JC: -and the artists coming to the school, and ye know, doing a class within the school. So, they got a different perspective on different people.

SH: Yes, yes.

JC: Cause all these artists went through their, ye know, their Japanese period and their all the other things. I mean, it's got a fantastic history-

PB: Mm.

JC: -when ye think about it, for just a little town.

PB: It has.

JC: And then, the population was just about two thousand and the town's doubled in size since then. I suppose that parting means it's not so pretty to paint but in the old days, there was so many beautiful old buildings and nooks and crannies and... All these closes.

0h 28m 01s

PB: And there- there still is, actually. Yeah.

SH: Mm.

PB: Ye know, off the High Street.

JC: Mm.

PB: I was wondering, I mean, obviously you have a great interest in art and do you think it has been influenced by the fact that you lived in Kirkcudbright? Um, ye know, I don't know if you actually paint yourself or have artistic inclinations-

JC: No, I don't.

PB: -but you have a- yeah.

JC: Yes, I- there's no doubt it is because of Kirkcudbright.

PB: Uhuh.

JC: And because I was- I mean, Jack used to go round and have coffee with people and I'd go with him-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -and we'd sit and chat. But I was absolutely hopeless at drawing and art of any kind. I just- but my grandson, I'll let ye see one of his paintings that he did for me, he's just... I mean, he's going to be a real painter, fabulous.

PB: Mm.

JC: He's now at the University of London, doing, um, journalism-

SH: Mmhm.

JC: -and painting. And, so, it's somewhere in the genes, there.

SH: Yes, yes, yes.

PB: Yeah.

JC: But yes, from that, as I said earlier, it was more the historic angle of seeing these people paint these paintings and thinking 'gosh, that's just like a photograph', ye know?

PB: Mmhm, mmhm.

JC: And that's gonna be on somebody's wall and they can look back a hundred years-

PB: Yes, it's a record.

JC: -and say 'that's what it used to look like, look at it now'.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

JC: And that was really why I started collecting paintings.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: I mean, I do love paintings but I also love the history.

PB: Yes, yes.

JC: And the history of Kirkcudbright's-

PB: And that perspective.

JC: -enormously important.

PB: Yeah. I was wondering if, as you knew Jack Hastings so well, did you ever meet Cecile Walton at all who lived in the little studio round the corner, or just opposite, ye know?

JC: I... I can vaguely remember-

PB: You don't have any recollection?

JC: I can vaguely remember going for coffee.

PB: Ok, yeah.

JC: But I can't remember much beyond that, ye know?

PB: Right. Yeah, mmhm.

Kirkcudbright Galleries – 0h 30m 00s

JC: Because Jack was- he was reserved and shy in many ways.

PB: Mmhm, yeah.

JC: Yeah. So, and that's...

SH: What do you- what do you think of the new gallery, the prospects of the new gallery?

JC: I'm appalled by it [*laughter*].

SH: Are you?

PB: In what respect [*laughter*]?

JC: [*laughter*] Yes. I just think that the townhall is just not the right place for it.

PB: Right building.

JC: It's a personal view.

PB: Mm.

JC: Ah, I mean, there's been some wonderful exhibitions there but it's never been quite what it should have been because you could never light it the way you wanted to.

SH: Mm.

JC: Of course, the strength of bulbs and all the rest of it comes into it.

PB: Mm.

JC: And I may be proved totally wrong and it'll mebbe work but I... [sighs] I mebbe-

PB: You would mebbe have preferred another building, ye know a new building or something?

JC: Well, ye know, I... I mean, the Johnson School had it. I think the Johnson School could've been made into a fantastic arts' centre.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: I mean, with the assembly hall there being-

PB: That's true, yeah.

JC: -your main art gallery for showing off but a lot of your artists and craftspeople could have come in there-

PB: Mm, mm.

JC: -and the whole thing could've been close together.

SH: Uhuh, uhuh.

PB: That's true, yeah.

JC: And... [sighs] I mean, I may be totally wrong but to spend three and a half million pounds...

PB: Mm.

JC: Uh, and I've watched those builders for months and months, and nothing very much seemed to happen. So, I hope there's been more happening inside [laughter].

PB: [laughter] I was gonna say, have you been inside?

JC: No, I haven't.

PB: No [laughter]?

JC: I'm just saying, I may be blown away-

PB: Yeah, yeah.

JC: -and totally wrong when I see it.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: But... There you are. I mean, I loved going to the art galleries in London when I go down. I'm down about once a month, perhaps, and try and go somewhere and see...

PB: Mmhm.

JC: Or if we go abroad, it's just fantastic to walk round.

PB: Yeah.

SH: Cause we were talking about this particular period, how did the artists display their art? Was there a... A gallery?

Local History / Tourism – 0h 32m 00s

JC: Ah...

SH: Was there- it just their homes? Did they sell-? How did they sell-?

JC: It was pretty well- pretty well in their own homes.

SH: Yes.

JC: Yep, it was.

SH: Mm.

JC: And, I mean, even Jack Hastings who had the shop, I don't think I ever remember seeing a painting hanging in there.

PB: No, no.

JC: And, ye know, today shops are all mixed up with everything, and the Selkirk Arms Hotel has got them all down at the walls.

SH: Yes.

JC: Which is great-

PB: Mmhm, mmhm.

JC: -because somehow we've gotta get this area known and we've totally failed that 'til now. I mean, the number of people that drive through here back and forward to Northern Ireland and won't stop between Stranraer and Dumfries is just frightening.

PB: Mmhm, mmhm.

JC: And, I mean, that's why I support, ye know, a national park here because I-

PB: Mm. I mean, I do think that could be a reason why it has retained its... Attractive [*laughter*]... Nature.

JC: Yes.

PB: I mean, that it has been bypassed in a certain manner. Although, I mean, I can see its much more- much more well-known now than certainly when I was, ye know, young. Back in the sixties, seventies, yeah.

JC: Mm, yes, I wouldn't like it to see it getting like the Lake District-

PB: Mm.

JC: -where it's just nose to tail, but I think because we're so spread out...

PB: Mm.

JC: And because so many areas have so much to actually have a look at, that we could take an awful lot more people than we have coming in.

PB: Yeah.

SH: Mmhm.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: But we- ye know, we've got Holiday Lodge up there and we have about forty weeks in the year, and people are coming back and back and back and back.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: But the new people come in to say 'why did nobody tell us about this part of the world before?'

PB: Mmhm.

JC: And the history that's here, with three castles, Orchardton Tower- have you been to Orhardton Tower, yes?

SH: Yes, and just the local history.

JC: Just the local history.

SH: Ye know, the covenanters and...

Local Archaeology – 0h 34m 00s

JC: Yeah.

SH: All the...

PB: John Paul Jones.

SH: John Paul Jones.

JC: Yes.

SH: And- yes, yes.

JC: Ye know, top o the hill, probably nobody knows but top o the hill at Senwick, as you're driving- you drive up out of- from the sea and then along, along straight and there's a bad corner on the road out to Senwick. Well, right up on top of the hill there, there's two rocks which had been covered over with soil and there's two covenanters listed there, just cut into the rocks.

PB: Oh, really?

JC: Well, I don't know... I happen to know because we actually took that field about forty years ago for hay- cutting hay, and they hay tedder-

SH: Yes?

JC: -had scratched the very thin scuff off the top of these rocks-

SH: Yes.

JC: -and it was all laid out.

SH: Oh.

JC: I don't know whether it's been marked or whether anyone knows it's there-

SH: Yes, yes.

JC: -but there is so much history-

SH: They will now.

JC: -so much history.

SH: They will now [*laughter*], yes.

JC: Well...

SH: Yes, and why not?

JC: But- and the problem is that, ye know, it's all there. The field behind here, we have cup and ring marks.

PB: Yeah?

JC: And nobody really knows what they are but there they are.

PB: Yeah.

JC: And I just found the other day there, markings on a rock in a field down there, and it's an absolute cross... And it's ninety degrees... It must've been drawn by somebody.

PB: Mmhm.

JC: So, I'm waiting on David Devereux coming up to have a look at it.

PB: I was gonna say, you're presumably, yeah, telling people [*laughter*] about-

JC: Yes, yes.

PB: -when ye find them, yeah.

JC: And then I was-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -building a- a part of the avenue wall fell down and I dug it right down to the bottom, to get a new base in and David was coming up the drive and he said 'did you see there's something on one of those stones?'... And [*knocking sound*] part of the base of that dyke over there...

SH: Yes?

JC: This was in it.

SH: Oh gosh.

PB: What does it say, actually?

JC: Well, it'll be interesting to see what you think what it says, but...

0h 36m 00s

PB: Yeah.

JC: Upsadaisy... There we are.

SH: Watch your...

[*clunking rock sounds*]

JC: Sorry, I'm digressing but...

SH: Yes, em, broad- broad...

PB: Broaden... Sss... This is a year, presum- is it SM...

JC: Well, that's what they all thought, yes.

PB: 1V...

JC: Mmhm.

PB: Maybe.

SH: What do you think?

PB: What does that say?

JC: Well...

SH: You've had longer to look at it.

[*talking over each other*]

JC: That's William Broun-

PB: Oh, ok.

JC: -and that is the family that looked after...

SH: Ahh.

PB: Oh, Broun. Ok.

JC: That's the family that looked after the, um... Cathedral? What was it, [?]?

PB: The abbey, yeah.

JC: And that actually is... Is, this is what I think it is, *is-*

PB: Is my...?

JC: Is my lover.

PB: Oh, right [*laughter*].

SH: Aw.

JC: Cause that was a heart.

PB: You're right, actually [*laughter*]. That's lovely.

SH: Aw, that's amazing.

JC: Isn't it amazing?

PB: That is.

JC: Yes, yes.

PB: I mean, on stone. I mean, it used to be done on trees.

SH: Trees, yes.

JC: Yes, absolutely. There used to be a tree out there that I'm glad it's down now [*laughter*]!

PB: [*laughter*] Really?

JC: But... I mean...

PB: Yeah.

JC: We're diverging again into bits of local history but it's...

SH: That's fascinating, yes.

JC: Yeah, mm.

PB: Yeah.

JC: And I think they were going to do a dig... Ah, to see if they could find the foundations of that old cathedral.

PB: Well, the abbey, there is-

JC: Abbey.

PB: -I went to a... I did go to a talk last year on that. So, there are people working-

JC: Working.

PB: -on it. But it seemed very conjectural. Ye know, I mean, they were giving ideas but, um...

JC: Mmhm.

SH: Anna Tongland-

PB: And I think Craig who is in our little team-

SH: Yes, yes.

PB: -he's working on that.

JC: On that?

SH: Oh.

PB: Yeah, Craig [?].

JC: It's the old original road... We think, came across the old bridge.

SH: Mm.

JC: And then hard up the side o the river-

PB: Yeah.

JC: -past the abbey, and then up and came out just below the quarry-

0h 38m 00s

PB: Yeah.

JC: -where Donald Hastings' house used to be. And then it crossed the road there, and then it goes up along the quarry, uh, field and then right through my field there-

PB: Which- the Tongland Quarry?

JC: Yes.

PB: Yeah, mmhm.

JC: Mmhm. And it comes right past that cottage there, straight across there, on up to Argrennan, and then goes straight on to the farm and comes out at the little cottage on the A75... Which was the lodge date for Argrennan big house-

PB: Uhuh.

JC: Where the drive came all the way across.

SH: Ahh.

PB: Oh, really?

JC: -to there.

PB: Yeah.

JC: And so, there's so much history here that we still haven't got recorded.

SH: Mm.

PB: That's right.

JC: And... Yeah.

PB: Yeah.

SH: Well, hopefully that's- will happen one way or another, cause it'd be a shame to lose it all – particularly when people like yourself are just finding- finding these things... And...

JC: Yes, ye know, I've- I've buried fourteen of my friends this winter... *[laughter]* So, ye begin to think...

SH: Aw, John.

PB: I know. The memories, I know.

JC: All that history's is gone, ye know, it's gone...

PB: Yeah.

JC: So, I'm more than happy to do anything I can and I'm sorry I don't- can't give you sort of more details about those artists but, um...

SH: No, ye know, we're- we're gleaning a lot of lovely things and, uh, it's going to be interesting to see what happens down the line.

JC: Well, you can add it all together.

SH: Yes.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

JC: Ye know, these are only just little snapshots.

SH: Hopefully, it's a lot of-

PB: Yes.

SH: Some of the... Anecdotes will go into the gallery, so that when you're looking at a picture you can, ye know, we're all used to now going into galleries and putting on earphones.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

SH: And hear some of the anecdotes about the artists.

JC: Mm.

PB: Mmhm.

SH: So, that should be really nice.

JC: I was trying to think if there's anything else, sort of personal basis, but... Yeah, blame it on old age.

SH: [*laughter*] Well, thanks. Well, it's been wonderful and thank you very much.

PB: Yeah.

SH: I think we'll stop now?

JC: Mm.

PB: Mm.

SH: And, uh, again, thank you very much.