

Interviewee: Elizabeth Brown (EB)	Interviewers: Mike Duguid (MD); James Burkitt (JB)
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TITLE	<i>James Birkitt and Mike Duguid interview Elizabeth Brown.</i>
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COUNTY	<i>Dumfries and Galloway</i>
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DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>28/02/2018</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>James Birkitt and Mike Duguid</i>
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SUMMARY	<i>Mike Duguid and James Birkitt interview Elizabeth Brown about her life, her family and the Kirkcudbright artists. She discusses her family background, meeting her husband, moving to Africa, and what led her and her husband to move to Borgue. Elizabeth discusses a number of local artists that her family knew including: Charles Oppenheimer, Lena Alexander, Anna Hotchkis, Miles Johnston, Dorothy Johnstone and Kate Campbell Nicholl. She also discusses her mother-in-law, Margery MacMinn's father, Dr John MacMinn, who was a well-known local doctor. Finally, they discuss the prospects of a new gallery in Kirkcudbright and the exhibitions put on by the other pre-existing galleries.</i>

**Elizabeth Brown – EB; James Birkitt – JB; Mike Duguid – MD.**

**Keywords: Background; Meeting her Husband; Moving to Africa; Charles Oppenheimer; Lena Alexander; Anna Hotchkis; Miles Johnston; Dr John MacMinn; Dorothy Johnstone; Kate Campbell Nicholl; Kirkcudbright Galleries.**

**Background – 0h 00m 00s**

JB: Ye get a double red button.

MD: So, we're now recording.

JB: Very good.

MD: I'll just say that my name is my name is Mike Duguid and I'm here with James Birkitt at [REDACTED] in the outskirts of the village of Borgue, overlooking the beautiful Knockbrev Shoreline. The village lies about six miles, I think, west of Kirkcudbright. And I'm here to interview Mrs Elizabeth Brown about her memories of the local artists who worked in and around the Kirkcudbright area,

around the sort of 1940s, 1960s sort of period. So, Elizabeth, perhaps I could start by asking you where you were born and how you came to live in Borgue?

EB: Yes, well, my father was in the army, in the Royal Engineers, and I was born in Chatham in Kent. Then, he was posted to Singapore and my mother and father and I were sent back to the UK in June of 1939.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Luckily. And- because she was pregnant with my brother. Otherwise, in Singapore, they would have had- they would have really suffered. So, my father bought a house near Aldershot, the home of the British Army-

MD: Mmhm.

EB: -in August of 1939, and that's where I- that was my home until I was married in 1959. Nineteen... Yes, that's right, 1959. So, my mother lived in that house from 1939, for fifty-two years.

MD: Mm.

EB: Well, I met my late husband because of being near Aldershot, because he was sent to Aldershot to do his officer training in the army, with the 15<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Hussars – Queen's Royal Hussars.

#### **Meeting her Husband – 0h 02m 02s**

And, um, a friend of- a chap who'd been at school with me in Farnham was also there at the same time, and he used to come over to our house for Sunday afternoon tea, and things like that. And, um, one day because my- Andrew had a motorbike, these two arrived with Peter on the back and I was up an apple tree, dutifully picking apples in my mother's garden. And I think this quite appealed to Andrew, being a country boy, having been brought up here at Roberton, Borgue. Well, then he was posted off to Malaya as a second lieutenant. Then, he came back from there and decided he would like to go into the colonial service. So, he did one year at Cambridge, where he learned to speak ChiBemba, the language for Northern Rhodesia, as it was then and um... He was then- *[laughter]* he had written down to the colonial service that he would like to go to North Borneo but they read the 'North' and sent him to Northern Rhodesia *[laughter]*... Well, he was there for two years as a cadet and you weren't allowed to get married during those two years. So, he decided that Northern Rhodesia wasn't for him – Zambia, as it is now – because it is completely covered in trees, twenty-foot high scrubby trees, in every direction, and when he'd been brought up here, overlooking the sea, he decided two years was enough for him.

#### **Moving to Africa – 0h 04m 00s**

So, we decided that I would go out to Africa and get a job and see him from time to time in the Christmas and Easter holidays and the odd weekend. And I got- easy to get a job then, you just got a job. No problem. So, I worked for six weeks before Christmas for the, uh... Federal government of Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and everything had to be typed in quintuplicate: one for each government, one to send, and one to keep. Then, I decided that was too far away from Andrew, so I got a job in Kitwe on the Copperbelt teaching in the girls' high school, Kitwe Girls' High School, which was just newly starting. It had- only had first year and second year, all white girls, no blacks, and I taught them French and English and Religious Studies. And then, Andrew's two years were up in the August of that year, so I finished that summer term and we came home and we got married in Farnham in Surrey, from my home that my father had bought in 1939.

He then did one year at Cirencester at the Royal Agricultural College, uh, Rural Estate Management, one year. And then we came here to this house, [REDACTED], which was then called Coarse Yard Cottage, and we were here for about- nearly twelve years and then father-in-law died, so we moved to Roberton up the road, for... Uh, twenty-eight years and then back down here for- and I've been here nearly twenty years now. So, altogether I've been along this stretch of road for nearly fifty-eight years, looking across the sea to the Isle of Man which is very lovely, and I love the wide-open skies.

**Charles Oppenheimer – 0h 06m 10s**

It reminds me of Africa. That's what I liked about Africa: the wide-open skies. So... Eh...

MD: So, there you are. Here you are in Borgue.

EB: Here I am. Here I am in Borgue.

MD: From southern England. So, can I ask then, how did any interest in art come about?

EB: Well, I think that's largely thanks to my late mother-in-law who was born Margery MacMinn in Kirkcudbright. And her father was the late Dr John MacMinn, much beloved of everyone in Kirkcudbright and roundabout. And he practiced as a doctor in Kirkcudbright until he was eighty-six and latterly, for several years, they lived at Blair House in the High Street. So, mother-in-law was born in 1908, so she was brought up with her bicycle cycling round the streets of old Kirkcudbright with Jessie M. King also cycling around the streets of Kirkcudbright, with her large, black hat and her black cloak, I understand. And I think... Now, Oppenheimer lived next door? Or nearly next door? Next door to Broughton House?

MD: Number 14, I think. Yeah, next door to Broughton House.

EB: Yeah, that's right. Yes.

MD: Number 14.

EB: Yeah.

MD: So, Blair House would be Number, eh... 8, yes.

EB: Yes, that's right.

MD: And he had Number 14.

EB: So, she obviously- they- the MacMinns and the Oppenheimers obviously knew each other well. And when my mother-in-law and father-in-law got married from Blair House, there's a photograph of them standing at the front door of Blair House, Oppenheimer painted them a lovely picture of two beautiful May trees in full bloom.

**0h 08m 18s**

EB: That's next door in the dining room.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: So, you know, they must've known each other quite well for them- for Oppenheimer to have painted a picture specially.

MD: Mm.

EB: For Margery MacMinn for her wedding.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And then mother-in-law's father and mother, the doctor and his wife, asked Oppenheimer to paint a picture looking from the bottom of the garden at Blair House across the river to the Stell. And it's a lovely watercolour. The colours are still very good, very true, especially the blue of the river. And in the bottom right-hand corner of the picture, is a small yacht and Robert Mitchell was here one day, years ago now, and he said oh, he remembered that yacht – it was called *Zulu*.

MD: Mm.

EB: And it had two masts but because... For artistic license, he removed one mast because he's quite right, it would have been- made the picture lopsided. And I'm told that that *Zulu* yacht won, I don't know how many, but it won at least one race from Kirkcudbright to the Isle of Man. That might be recorded somewhere.

MD: Mm.

EB: Yes.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, that is, um... So, ye know, I can picture mother-in-law knowing all these artists really well. How- when did Hornel live in?

**0h 10m 00s**

MD: Uh, 1901. He came to Broughton House.

EB: He came to Broughton House.

MD: Died in 1933, so.

EB: Yes, well she would have known him as well.

MD: Yes.

EB: Yes, 1908 she was born. Mmhm.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Yes.

MD: Yeah, she would've known him.

EB: Yes.

MD: Mm.

EB: Yes.

MD: That's rather a fine one.

EB: And, um... There was- I have a Jessie M. King, a small drawing, but my son- one of my sons has got it at the moment, but when we moved from this house, [REDACTED], up to Roberton, we found this Jessie M. King drawing lying in a corner of the garage.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, we got it remounted and framed.

MD: Mm, yeah.

EB: And it's really nice, yeah.

MD: Mm.

EB: It's just a black and white... Yeah. Um... Sail something swiftly the western wave spirit of light? Spirit of night? Should've got that up.

MD: Is that the title of the painting, now?

EB: Yes. 'Walk swiftly o'er the western waves spirit of night', I think.

MD: Uhuh?

EB: Yeah, that's what it was called.

MD: Aye, aye.

EB: Yes.

MD: So-

EB: So, so mother-in-law grew up as a girl and a teenager and so on, being surrounded by these Kirkcudbright artists-

MD: Mm.

EB: -and having a great interest in their work, and um... She was lucky enough to be able to purchase some of these paintings. But the one of- from the garden at Blair House was commissioned by the old doctor and his wife-

MD: Right.

EB: -so, that's been in the family for... I suppose since the thirties or forties.

MD: Mmhm, mmhm.

EB: Forties... So, then she became interested in all the other up and coming artists, like Lena Alexander. Yes, and, em...

**Lena Alexander – 0h 12m 00s**

MD: She was famous for her-

EB: And that would be Miles-

MD: -rose paintings, probably.

EB: Yes. She- and mother-in-law gave me that lovely-

MD: Oh, is that one there, yeah?

EB: -painting of roses.

MD: Mm.

EB: By Lena Alexander for a birthday.

MD: That was her trademark, wasn't it?

EB: Yes, it was her trademark. And I remember her too, clearly.

MD: Uhuh?

EB: Clearly enough, yeah.

MD: What do you- what do you remember of her? I've seen a photograph of her.

EB: Oh, yes.

MD: Quite a big lady with glasses, that's her?

EB: Yes, that's her.

MD: So, what do you remember of her?

EB: Her... I just remember her being about Kirkcudbright and her always being friendly.

MD: Was she a nice lady?

EB: Yes, nice lady. Yes.

MD: Right, and you'd have been how old? What age difference would it have been?

EB: I would have been, em... Let me think. I came in here in 1960 when I was... Born in '35.

MD: So, that's twenty-five.

EB: Twenty-five, yes. Late twenties, thirties.

MD: Mm.

EB: That sort of age.

MD: Right.

EB: Yeah. And then the other interesting lady in Kirkcudbright was Anna Hotchkis, and um... I... I think I got to know her through my brother-in-law, my husband's brother, who married an American, and she was very artistic and she- somehow, they got to know Anna Hotchkis in Kirkcudbright whenever they came to Borgue. And Anna had been in Hong Kong and this is where they, those two, met.

MD: Ah.

EB: David was in shipping, and Anna Hotchkis very much wanted her book to be published and, um... She didn't really know how to set about having a book published. So, David and Dotty – Dotty being the American lady – were able to help her have her book... David and Dotty were able to help her have her book published in Hong Kong.

**Anna Hotchkis – 0h 14m 14s**

MD: And what's the title?

EB: So, the title is *The Nine Sacred Mountains of China*.

MD: Mm.

EB: And it's by Anna M. Hotchkis and Mary Augusta Mullikin-

MD: Mm.

EB: -who did the... The paintings.

MD: Ah right.

EB: And, um... So, this was published in 1973...

MD: Uhuh?

EB: And it's, uh... Very brave of them, these two single ladies, they- they did pilgrimages, mainly the years 1935 to '36, I think.

MD: Mm.

EB: Which is when the warlords were...

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: Busy in China.

MD: Yes.

EB: Yes. And they climbed. The two of them climbed the nine sacred mountains of China. So, anyway, David and Dotty were able to have her book published by Vetch and Lee Limited-

MD: Mm.

EB: Hong Kong.

MD: Oh, in Hong Kong?

EB: In 1973.

MD: Mm.

EB: Yes. They were married- David and Dotty were married in Hong Kong in 1964.

MD: Right.

EB: So- so Anna was very interested to become friends with them.

MD: Mm.

EB: And they were very good to her.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Yes. So, then I needed a picture. I needed to buy a picture for my mother.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Because, during the war, my mother was Irish, born and brought up in Cork, and one of her Irish brothers in law had said to her, [*in an Irish accent*] 'now, Edith, my dear, I'd like to buy you a picture but I don't want to give it to you until the war is over, in case it gets bombed' [*laughter*].

So, she never got the picture [*laughter*].

MD: Oh, really?

EB: So, this was... Nineteen... Late 1960s, I thought, well, I will try and get a picture for her [*laughter*]. So, Anna Hotchkis invited me for coffee one morning, and we talked about the possibility of my buying a picture from her. And which I did and my mother loved it and now it's back in this house.

MD: Mm.

EB: And it is, um... It's a lovely view. As you come from Dundrennan down towards Kirkcudbright, you've got Banks Farm on your right and it's painted from just above the turning to Banks Farm. Lovely view down on to the water, and it's always been a favourite view of mine.

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: So, she invited me to coffee and I had a little boy staying with me, a three-year-old... I was looking after him for a friend and I remember clearly her little house in the Greengate Close studio.

MD: Mm.

EB: And you walked in to the studio and she slept in a- it was like a gallery, a half landing-

MD: Mmhm.

EB: -on the right. She went up the stairs and that was her bedroom, and then down to the left she had her little- little tiny kitchen and a little tiny bathroom with a hip bath.

MD: Mm.

EB: I always remember that. That's the first time I'd ever really seen a hip bath in somebody's house.

MD: Mm.

EB: And she was so kind and very sweet to this little boy and treated him... Ye know, as if she was really enjoying his company which I'm sure she was.

MD: Mm.

EB: And she had a lot of paintings on... Ye know, in folders and things, so I chose that one. So, that was- and then, she lived to be ninety-nine.

**Miles Johnston – 0h 18m 02s**

MD: I know, she was an incredible age, yeah.

EB: Yes, and oh, the whole community of Kirkcudbright was really sad that she'd died before she made it to a hundred...

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: Which was... A shame. But she was a delightful old lady looking after herself.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Very bright and interested in everybody and everything, and very talented.



MD: Mm.

EB: So, that was a pleasure. And then, mother-in-law used to buy... Um, what would you call those carved-?

MD: Uh... Yeah...

EB: Carvings? Um... *[laughter]*

MD: Yes, I recognise them.

EB: Made by W. Miles Johnston.

MD: Miles Johnston.

EB: Yes, W. Miles Johnston.

MD: Would that be a toast rack? Would that be classed as a toast rack?

EB: That's a toast rack, yes. And he made these... What would it be-?

MD: Well, you could- I suppose just animal and bird carvings.

EB: Plywood?

MD: They'd be probably plywood, I guess.

EB: They'd be-?

MD: Yeah, I think they would.

EB: Yes, he did a lot of work.

MD: Mm.

EB: Made animals, and bowls, and this is a toast rack and all sorts of things. So, mother-in-law was very keen on buying these, so I've got several.

MD: Have you? Right.

EB: Yeah, upstairs.

MD: Well, I interviewed- well, Sam Kelly did an interview and he- he had a beautiful one – a set of four birds.

EB: Oh, yes.

MD: And they were climbing out of trees and branches of a tree.

EB: Oh, lovely. Yes.

MD: So, a similar idea, so...

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: And did you know- did you know him then, Miles Johnston?

EB: Yes, I used to go in there and see him.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: -and his wife. It was called 'The Crafts', I think, his shop.

MD: Right.

EB: And it was in Castle Street, just diagonally across from the castle on the other side of the road.

MD: Right.

EB: Not far along.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: That's where he was. And he painted, as well. I've got a little painting by the front door I can show you.

MD: Right, right.

EB: Yes.

MD: Em...

EB: [*mumbling*]... It's a Miles Johnston.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: He painted a lot of pictures at Carrick and the hills – the Gatehouse hills. Mmhm.

**0h 20m 04s**

MD: Oh right. Right.

EB: Yes.

MD: And I saw- I saw one in the book, he painted Classiebawn, the big house in southern Ireland in... Near Mullaghmore, in county Sligo.

EB: Oh right, yes.

MD: I don't know what kind of connection was there, but.

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: Yes, he seemed quite a prolific...

EB: Yes.

MD: Prolific painter. So... Can you remember him? What were they like?

EB: Um, I don't remember him very well.

MD: Hmm.

EB: He was- again, he was very open and easy to talk to, ye know?

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Um... I think he must've been very busy with doing a lot of paintings and his craftwork.

MD: Mm.

EB: And running the shop, as well. I think his wife, maybe, largely ran the shop.

MD: Right.

EB: But my mother-in-law was very generous and liked giving presents, so she was often in there buying presents for people.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Yes. And there's... Some of them are now in America with...

MD: Oh right.

EB: My brother-in-law, David, where he now lives. Yeah.

MD: Right. Now, going back to MacMinn-

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: As you mentioned before...

EB: ... That's right, yes.

MD: That painting there, can you tell me about that one?

EB: Yes. This is a lovely little... It's sort of a cartoon, isn't it?

MD: Yeah, a watercolour.

EB: It's a watercolour.

MD: It's a beautiful little... Uhuh.

EB: And the old man, the Dr MacMinn, John, is wearing a brown jacket and grey trousers and a black- looks like a knitted waistcoat and a sort of rust coloured tie and a cap.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And he seems to have a moustache there. And he's got his black bag in his right hand. I think he's raising his cap to somebody.

**Dr John MacMinn – 0h 22m 06s**

MD: Hmm.

EB: And this was painted... Em... And it's of Doctor John MacMinn, MD... Is that CM?

MD: Uhh...

EB: Uh, sketched by Lamont, RSA, The Stell, Kirkcudbright.

MD: Right.

EB: About 1925.

MD: Mm. So, that's Jack Lamont, is it?

EB: That would be... I suppose so. You said Jack Lamont?

MD: Mmhm, mmhm.

EB: Yes, about 1925.

MD: Mm.

EB: But I- he died before I came here. So, I didn't know him of course, but I imagine-

MD: Who- you didn't know that MacMinn had died before?

EB: MacMinn had died?

MD: John? Yeah, yeah.

EB: Yes, yes, John MacMinn. I think he died... Um, in the late forties.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: I'm not sure. Mmhm.

MD?: It certainly seems to... Ye can imagine what he's like though, from the painting, can't ye?

EB: Yes, I can imagine... Yes, he looks like a humble person, doesn't he?

MD: Yeah.

EB: Yeah.

MD: Yeah.

EB: But it-

MD?: Him just putting on the bunnet, yes.

EB: Putting his bunnet on [*laughter*].

MD: Just kind of captures the moment in time.

EB: But- and the story goes that he would walk eight miles across the snow for a home birth.

MD: Oh right.

EB: People still- the old people still talk about old Doctor John.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, he was much... Much loved by his patients.

MD?: Mmhm.

EB: And then I think they both died. He- that's the picture of his wife. Oh yes... And then, this is a photo- this is a drawing of my mother-in-law sketched by Dorothy Johnstone.

MD?: Oh right.

EB: Um, about 1918. So, she would be ten, Margery MacMinn.

**Dorothy Johnstone – 0h 24m 03s**

MD: Mm.

EB: And Dorothy Johnstone was nothing to do with the painter W. Miles Johnston.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: But she married- mother-in-law has written on the back, em, that Dorothy Johnstone married Sutherland... Or was that in Sutherland? Sutherland in Aberdeen? So, it must be... She must- married question mark, Sutherland, in Aberdeen. So, she must have gone from here...

MD: Mm.

EB: To...

MD: To Aberdeen.

EB: Aberdeen. Aberdeen. And married Mr Sutherland. But that's a question mark there.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: But it's a lovely... It's a lovely...

MD: Just a sketch, is it? A pencil sketch? A pencil sketch?

EB: It's a sketch. I think it's a pencil sketch.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And it's signed D. Johnstone.

MD: Johnstone.

EB: Yes. And that's the little girl, ten-year-old, who was hobnobbing with all these artists. So, this Dorothy Johnstone must have lived in Kirkcudbright as well. She must have known...

MD: Yes, yes, she was one of them.

EB: Known her as well.

MD: Mm.

EB: Yeah.

MD: Yeah.

EB: It's a lovely picture there.

JB: Oh yes, excellent picture.

EB: Yes.

JB: Thank you.

MD: And this one?

EB: And then this is a photograph of my mother-in-law's mother, and she was the eldest of six daughters.

MD: Oh right.

EB: They were- their surname was Summers. Summers. She was called Minnie Summers and she married John MacMinn. So, she was Minnie MacMinn [*laughter*]... And her grandchildren, like my husband, called her Granny Min. And this is a delightful photograph of her sitting at the bottom of the garden of Blair House, and the tide is out. You can just see the river... Very low, and she's sitting there. And she had a beautiful garden, I believe.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And that's where they both lived until they died.

MD: So, is that John MacMinn, the doctor's, wife?

EB: So, that's John MacMinn's wife.

MD: Yeah, ok.

EB: Yes, Min, Minnie.

MD: Right.

EB: Minnie MacMinn. So, the... The person to inherit the house, Blair House, was their son-

MD: Mmhm.

EB: -David MacMinn, who was also a doctor in Kirkcudbright.

MD: Right.

EB: And he lived there for a long number of years, until he sold Blair House and bought the Harbour Cottage which is the one right adjoining the Harbour Cottage Gallery.

MD: Oh, yes.

EB: Yes.

MD: The one with the roses?

EB: Yes.

MD: In the pathway?

EB: The one with the roses, yes.

MD: Yeah.

EB: He lived there until he died age seventy-four. And that was... Yes, he died when he was seventy-four and my- one of my sons was sixteen, I remember, at the time.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, what year would that have been? The boy was born in 1962, so that must be...

MD: '62? So, it's '78?

EB: Yes. Mmhm.

MD: '78 he died in.

EB: That would be right, yes.

MD: Aye. Aye, David MacMinn.

EB: David MacMinn.

MD: Aye.

EB: He was a doctor in the army.

MD: Ah.

EB: And through the war, I think. And then when he came out of the army, he took over his father's practice at Blair House. I remember him coming- you went in the front door at Blair House, and the waiting room was on the left and the, um... The examination room was on the right. So, I went in to the- let myself into the hall and here he was, just coming up the stairs from the kitchen below, hugging a hot water bottle [laughter]... On his way for an afternoon nap [laughter]. Yeah. He was a great rugby player.

0h 28m 12s

MD: Oh right.

EB: Got several caps for Scotland.

MD: Did he? Aw right.

EB: He played several times. And he was Scottish- he was president to the SRU.

MD: -RU. Uhuh.

EB: In the sixties.

MD: Right.

EB: Yeah. And I think he was one of the ones responsible for the SRU putting an electric blanket...

MD: Under the...?

EB: Under the...

MD: The pitch?

EB: Yes.

MD: Ah right. Right.

EB: Yes, yes. At Murrayfield.

MD: Ah.

EB: Yeah.

MD: Ahead of his time then, by the sound of it probably.

EB: Yes. So, I think Margery is quite like her mother. The, uh... The photo.

MD: In the sketch? The girl?

EB: Yes. Yes, she's got the same-

MD: Yeah.

EB: -shape of face, as her mother.

MD: Yes.

EB: That's similar.

MD: Yeah. Ah.

ED: Yes.

JB: Very good.

MD: So, are there other artists ye knew?

EB: Well, the other one I knew was in Gatehouse of Fleet and that-

MD: Oh yeah. Was that Kate?

EB: Kate Nicholl.

MD: Kate Campbell Nicholl. Yeah, Kate Ca- Kate Nicholl. Right.

EB: Yes, yes, yes. Kate Nicholl.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: And I met her at Ardwall, Gatehouse, the home of Walter and Kath McCulloch.

MD: McCulloch, uhuh.

EB: Cause Kath McCulloch used to hold her, what was known as 'the Hags' Hop', every Wednesday afternoon in the winter [*laughter*]. And it started off- she started it in 1953 and, um... She- her idea was to invite her contemporaries, her lady friends, to Scottish country dancing, on a Wednesday afternoon from two 'til four. And, just for fun and getting together and so on, and she had got her- Kath McCulloch, Mrs McCulloch, had got her teaching certificate from the-

**Kate Campbell Nicholl – 0h 30m 06s**

MD: Mm.

EB: -Royal Scottish Country Dance Society.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: So, when I came here, she- she... I met her somewhere, so she invited me – would I like to go and join the hags? and [*laughter*]... Her husband had called it... 'Oh, I don't know what to call you', he said to his wife. 'I'm going to call you the bloody hags' [*laughter*].

JB: Right.

EB: So, she said 'oh yes, we'll call it 'the Hags' Hop' [*laughter*]. So, every mid-September, we'd each get a postcard saying 'Hags will start again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October', or whatever it was. But it was strictly two 'til four and winter only. So, I met a lot of people, all ages, when I started-

MD: Mm.

EB: -I was twenty-six, I think, twenty-five and, um, there was one girl of eighteen and the oldest was eighty.

MD: Oh right.

EB: So, it was all ages in between.

JB: Mm.



EB: But it was a delightful, uh...

MD: So, did ye take to the country dancing ok? It's something you'd done before, had you?

EB: Well, I'd done a bit before at school and things.

MD: Oh right.

EB: And then, when I was in London at college, I did a bit there. Ye know, it was on a Tuesday evening above a pub, something like that. So, it was a bit wild [*laughter*]. But she taught us to do it properly, which was good.

MD: Aye.

EB: And I ended up getting my teaching certificate myself, so...

MD: Ah right. Cause you used to dance at Twynholm, didn't you?

EB: I have danced in Twynholm, yes.

MD: Cause I do- I still go, yeah.

EB: That's right, yes.

MD: But is that- so, is that how you met this artist, then?

EB: Yes.

MD: Yeah.

EB: So, that's where I met Kate Nicholl.

MD: Right. She used to go to this dancing group?

EB: She went to the dancing, yes.

MD: Oh right. Aye, aye.

**0h 32m 00s**

EB: She went to the dancing. And she had, um... Skidded in her car and gone over a bank and absolutely smashed her- one of her kneecaps.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: So, she wasn't- she couldn't actually dance. I never actually saw her dancing but she would stomp around in time to the music [*laughter*]. And she was a great character and very meticulous and she was trained as a sculptress.

MD: Ahh, right.

EB: But she... I didn't actually ever see any of her... Oh, yes, I think she did a bust of Mrs Murray Usher.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: I think, yeah.

MD: Right.

EB: But when I knew her, she was painting.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: She was a very good draftswoman. Her drawing was immaculate and beautiful. I can show you one of her... So again, mother-in-law gave me one of hers for a birthday present.

MD: Right.

EB: And she gave, uh, one of my sons another one and he's got it here.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: But she was amazing. She built a house in Planetree Park at the bottom end of Gatehouse of Fleet. And she must've been in her seventies when she built it- had it built. And she had big picture windows looking up the valley and she made every doorway wide enough in case she was confined to a wheelchair.

MD: Wheelchair, right *[laughter]*.

EB: Which she actually wasn't, but I think she lived to be eighty-eight.

MD: Mm.

EB: Living there. And I remember popping in to see her one day, and here she was, making herself a hot pudding. It was something like apple fritters, ye know.

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: But I thought to myself, well, I'm sure when I'm eighty something I won't feel like making myself apple fritters *[laughter]*.

MD: *[laughter]* Apple fritters... *[laughter]* From scratch.

**0h 34m 00s**

EB: But she was that sort of person.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: Who, uh... Yeah. And funnily enough, her son was in Zambia, not far from Kitwe, and he was growing tobacco, I think.

JB: Ahh, tobacco, yes.

EB: Yes, yes. And he- he actually married a black lady, an African woman, and they had four children and they came to stay with Kate Nicholl in Gatehouse, so we invited them for tea at Roberton. And these four beautiful black children were immaculately dressed in white shoes and socks *[laughter]*.

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: And, uh... So, they were very proud of them, yeah. And he died sort of... Rather early, I think, Angus Nicholl. He- I'm not sure how old he was but, ye know, it was an early-ish death, I think. So, I don't- I never heard what happened to the wife and the children.

JB: No.

EB: Mmhm.

MD: Mm.

EB: But she- everything Kate Nicholl did, she did it perfectly.

MD: Mm.

EB: Ye know, she was that sort of person. Her father had- her husband had been a doctor-

MD: Mm.

EB: -in Devon, I think.

MD: Uhuh, uhuh.

EB: Oh, yes and then in the war, they felt obliged to send their two sons to... Canada?

MD: Ah right.

EB: Ye know, for the duration.

MD: For training? Ah right.

EB: Yeah. And, um... Of course, she somewhat lost touch with them, naturally enough. Yeah. But I think she was pleased they were safe but she obviously missed them.

MD: Mm.

EB: That must've been quite a hard decision for her.

JB: Oh yeah.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, I'm pleased to have paintings of hers.

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: Yes.

MD: And you can't think of any other, em... Dorothy Nesbitt? Was she a painter or was she just married to... Was that Miles Johnston's wife?

**Kirkcudbright Galleries – 0h 36m 05s**

EB: Um-

MD: Dorothy Nesbitt? No?

EB: No, she wasn't. No. I don't know who...

MD: Yeah...

EB: Who would know about her.

MD: Yeah, ok.

EB: Must be recorded somewhere.

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: Mmhm. So, Hornel, came to Broughton House in...

MD: Well, he bought the- he came back from Australia in 1866.

EB: Yes. Right.

JB: And went to the academy and then Edinburgh and then Antwerp.

EB: Oh yeah.

MD: But then bought Broughton House in 1901.

EB: Oh, he bought it in...

MD: And stayed with his sister, uh, Tizzy, until- he died in 1933, and she died in 1950, so.

EB: Oh, right. Yes.

MD: So, she- you'd not have been here then. You wouldn't have known her either.

EB: No. No, that's right. Mmhm, yes.

MD: So... So, it's really, I guess, it's really through your mother-in-law who's the real -

EB: Yes.

MD: -instigator in your interest-

EB: Yes.

MD: -in art. But you've continued that, haven't you? And...

EB: Yes, well...

MD: So, are you looking forward to the new gallery opening in Kirkcudbright?

EB: Yes, that's right. Yes, that'll be exciting.

MD: Cause you-

EB: How's it going?

MD: Well, I think they're getting there. It's maybe a little bit later than they expected but it's getting there.

EB: Yes.

MD: And it should be... Apparently, it's fantastic inside, what they've done.

EB: Is it?

MD: For the townhall.

EB: Yes, yes, yes.

MD: And it'll be a real eye-opener.

EB: Oh, is it? Yes.

MD: So, I hope... But they will depend on a lot on volunteers.

EB: Yes.

MD: There's no question of that.

EB: Yes, quite.

MD: To staff it all.

EB: Oh, they'll probably have plenty of volunteers.

MD: Well, you'd hope so.

EB: Yes.

MD: I think it's an enormous part of the project, really, to generate interest in... In Kirkcudbright as the artists' town.

EB: Yes, quite.

MD: Which it is.

EB: Yes.

MD: Um... So...

EB: Yes.

MD: Cause, I mean, did you go most of the summer exhibitions that they had on? Ye know, in July and August?

EB: I think most of them I did, yes.

MD: Yeah.

EB: Yes, yes, they were wonderful.

MD: Yeah, yeah.

EB: We're very lucky to have those paintings brought to Kirkcudbright.

MD: Mm.

EB: Mm.

MD: And did you have a favourite one? Do you- can you remember any particular ones that you enjoyed?

**0h 38m 04s**

EB: Um... No.

MD: Cause, if I remember right, they had the impressionists one-

EB: Yes.

MD: -which was a big one.

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: And then they had the Glasgow Boys one.

EB: Yes, they did. I...

MD: And they had two Glasgow Girls ones.

EB: Yes. Yes, I enjoyed those very much. Yes.

MD: Was that because... Why do you think that was? Because they had more than just the paintings, didn't they, the Glasgow Girls?

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: Ye know, they had the stained glass and the jewellery, and the leather work and all that sort of stuff, as well.

EB: That's right. Yes, so they did.

MD: Remember that display?

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: And then they had the Fleming collection. Remember that one? Remember...?

EB: No, I don't know that I did that one.

MD: Right. That was quite early on.

EB: Yes.

MD: And the colourists.

EB: The colourists, yes. Yes.

MD: And then they had... Eh, *Tam o' Shanter*, Goudie's *Tam o' Shanter* paintings.

EB: Oh, that's right. Yes, I remember that clearly. Yes.

MD: They had a fair variety over the years.

EB: A lot of work put on- put into running those exhibitions. Yeah.

MD: Mm, mm, mm.

EB: Yes.

MD: So, hopefully they'll do the same, they'll have...

EB: Yes.

MD: Rotating exhibitions, plus the permanent collections, so...

EB: Yes, yes. So, they'll have a permanent collection?

MD: Yeah, yeah.

EB: Mmhm. Yes.

MD: And over time, they'll hope to build it up, I think.

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: Mm.

EB: And where- where will the paintings come from for the permanent exhibition? Or they've got enough already?

MD: Well, there's obviously places already, like the Stewartry Museum, I think, will be lending some.

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: Some'll be private- private ownership. They will be on loan, I guess.

EB: Yes, yes.

MD: So, there'll be a variety, I think-

EB: Yes.

MD: -of... Uh, of sources. And then ultimately, maybe part of the Viking horde will come to visit the specially designed area up at the top there, which has got all the security appliances, etcetera for...

EB: Yes, the very top.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Yes, I believe so.

MD: Yeah.

EB: Mmhm.

MD: So, uh...

EB: I hope so.

**0h 40m 01s**

MD: Mmhm.

EB: It should be there, shouldn't it?

MD: Mm. Alright. James, did you have any-?

JB: I don't, I think you've asked... [*clearing throat*] Elizabeth's given us so much information...

MD: Yeah, yeah.

JB: I didn't know existed, as an incomer.

MD: It's been wonderful.

JB: It's been fascinating. Em, of course this book helps, and you'd mentioned quite a few of the names.

EB: Yes. The-

JB: And probably knew most- a lot of them.

EB: A lot of them, yes. That's right, yes.

JB: So, I can look them up now.

EB: Yes, that's right and see... Um, Dallas, that was the other. I didn't know her-

MD: You didn't know them-?

EB: -Ann Dallas but she did a lovely one of Kirkandrews which my sister-in-law has.

MD: Oh. Oh right.

EB: Yeah. Oh, and E.A. Taylor mother-in-law knew as well.

JB: Mm.

MD: Oh, did she? Uhuh.

EB: Mmhm, yes.

MD: Jessie's husband.

EB: Yes, that's right. Because she had, I think, two paintings of his... Which have now gone to other grandchildren.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Mmhm.

MD: Right.

EB: I haven't got any of his.

MD: Right. He mainly did sort of talking about charcoal sketches and things, didn't he? Sketches?

EB: Yes. Quite bold.

MD: Yeah.

JB: Mm.

MD: Yeah.

EB: Yes. Yes, so if it hadn't been for mother-in-law, I probably wouldn't... Know much about the Kirkcudbright artists at all [*laughter*].

MD: Mm, mm. But it is a good way to know the town, isn't it? Through them, if ye like.

EB: Through them. Yes, it is, isn't it?

MD: Through the pictures, I guess, and the-

EB: Yes. When... When... I think, before they lived in Blair House, they lived in the house... Now, um, beside Tesco's, to the right of Tesco's, there's a house.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Which was the dentist, was it?

MD: Dentist.

EB: Yes.

MD: It still is the- ye know, and still is the dentist, you mean?

JB: Yeah.



EB: Yes, in Kirkcudbright.

MD: That one still is... Yes, the dentist.

0h 42m 00s

EB: Well, I think that's the house the doctor lived in.

MD: Oh right.

EB: Yes. So, she- mother-in-law would've been, ye know, right in the heart of the town-

MD: Mm.

EB: -which would be much smaller now- then, that is now.

MD: Mm. Cause when did you arrive? Was it 1960?

EB: I came in 1960.

MD: '60?

EB: Yes.

MD: So, I mean, it'd still be quite a quiet place then, was it?

EB: Yes, because there were no new houses out by the golf course or anywhere.

MD: Right, right.

EB: No. Just really the central part of town.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And Tongland Road, of course.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: So, um... Yes, and then I'm not sure when they bought Blair House but they spent a long time there, I think.

MD: Mm.

EB: She was married from there and I think, she married in 1934, so she would have been twenty-six.

MD: Mm.

EB: Mmhm.

MD: Mm.

EB: Yes, 1934. Yes, and... And then David MacMinn practiced there.

MD: Yeah.

EB: Until he moved to the Harbour...

MD: Uhuh.

EB: Cottage with the roses.

MD: Mm, and ye know Bob Redaway is there now.

EB: Yes, that's right.

MD: And he's done a wonderful job on the house, I think.

EB: Yes, wonderful. And the garden.

MD: And outside too, yeah.

EB: Yes.

MD: And the garden. So, it's very nice for Broughton House. Visitors will be able to look out on that-

EB: Very nice.

MD: -that window and see a nice garden next door.

EB: Yes, and see that garden.

MD: And Blair-

EB: Yes.

MD: And I always point out to visitors, the castellated tool shed at the bottom of the garden.

EB: Yes, that's right [*laughter*].

MD: Oh yeah. And the wonderful view down the marina.

EB: Yes.

MD: Which, of course, in your picture, wasn't there of course. There was no marina.

EB: No, no that's right. Just-

MD: There was just a few solitary boats would've been parked there, just like that, I guess.

EB: Just *Zulu*, yes, yes.

MD: Mmhm, mmhm.

EB: I took my sister-in-law, Pat Mackenzie... Um, she was Pat Brown and my father-in-law was married before, so his first wife was Lorraine Brown and she was the mother of two daughters. So, Pat and Anne, and Pat... Well, they lived all over the place but she's now in Merse House, aged ninety-two.

**0h 44m 16s**

MD: Mm.

EB: So, Bob and John invited us for coffee one morning, about three or four years ago, and we went down the little... little road beside the house and in the garden gate.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And Pat said, 'oh, where's the wall?' [*laughter*]. And when she used to visit her step-granny and grandfather, in Blair House, there was a big high wall-

MD: Mmhm.

EB: -and you couldn't see the garden from the house-

MD: No, that's right.

EB: -because of this wall.

MD: Aw right.

EB: And she remembered that wall, and Bob said 'oh yes, there was a wall' but it was now removed.

MD: Mm.

EB: Mmhm. So, em, they used to have her for- to stay for the night if there was a dance at Kirkcudbright Academy.

MD: Ah right [*laughter*].

EB: And she said Granny Min was always baking. She- uh, you went into the house and the wonderful smells of baking from the downstairs kitchen.

MD: I think people did a lot more then, didn't they?

EB: Yes.

MD: It's coming- seems to be coming back into vogue, of course-

EB: Yes.

MD: -with *The Great British Bake Off*, but eh...

EB: Yes, that's right.

MD: I think people seem to bake a lot.

EB: So, I think Granny Min must have been a very hospitable lady.

MD: Mm.

EB: Home-loving.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: Mmhm.

JB: Yes, my wife, Brenda- I think you've met Brenda, haven't you? She bakes quite a bit.

EB: Oh yes?

JB: And she did some scones for the, eh... Borgue get together.

EB: Oh yes, on a Tuesday morning.

JB: And within quarter of an hour, they'd all gone – about thirty or forty of them.

EB: Oh.

JB: And I didn't get one [*laughter*].

EB: Oh no [*laughter*]... Oh dear [*laughter*].

JB: So [*laughter*]...

MD: Yeah. Well, it's been wonderful.

0h 46m 00s

JB: Yes.

MD: Is there anything else that ye...

EB: Oh, anything else...

MD: Think might be relevant to the artists?

EB: Oh, let me think. Uh... Um... Well... I could go on a bit about this, this house, and so on. This house... Did I show you the photo at the front door of it before it was extended into this?

MD: Uh... I think maybe on my last visit we did, yeah.

EB: Yes, that's right.

MD: So, this is the what? The old part or the new part?

EB: This is the new part-

MD: Right.

EB: -built in 1905.

MD: Oh right, right.

EB: So, yeah. And this-

MD: So, it's relatively new then [*laughter*]?

EB: Relatively new [*laughter*]. And the picture rail is original.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: Arts and Crafts.

MD: Right.

EB: And the...

JB: Oh yes.

EB: The deep skirtingboard is original Arts and Crafts.

MD: Uhuh.

EB: And all the doors. All the doors in the house, except one, are like this.

MD: Mm.

EB: With big, big latches.

MD: Mmhm.

JB: Yes.

EB: And they've latch- big hinges, I mean, and big latches.

MD: Yeah, that's- yeah.

JB: Yeah.

EB: Yeah. And then... And this was all done by the grandfather at Knockbex.

MD: Ah right.

EB: Who built Knockbex.

MD: Right.

JB: Mm.

EB: How... Well, he bought Knockbex Estate in...

MD: This is your husband's grandfather?

EB: Grandfather.

MD: Grandfather.

EB: Yes, grandfather.

MD: Andrew's grandfather?

EB: Yes, Andrew's grandfather. So...

JB: Elizabeth, I'm interrupting. Could- who's that photograph of that girl in the corner?

EB: Oh yes. That's my mother.

JB: Really?

EB: Yes. And that was taken in 1910... And she was four. And there were seven of them in the family, ending up with three little girls. So, for some reason, the mother and father decided to have the three little girls photographed, which was quite something in 1910.

JB: Yeah.

MD: '10, would've been.

JB: Such a striking-

**0h 48m 00s**

EB: And then my mother went and got scarlet fever and diphtheria together, aged ten- age four.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, they evacuated all the six other children, sent them out of the house, and they nursed her at home 'til she was better, and she lived to be ninety-five [*laughter*].

JB: Cause in those days it was a- life threatening.

EB: It was, yes, yes.

JB: That's a remarkable photograph.

EB: It's a lovely photo, isn't it? Yes. And then, because they thought she was going to die, they had it enlarged and framed like that.

JB: Ah right.

EB: So, when my father bought that house in Farnham in Surrey, the first thing he did was to place it above the fireplace in that house.

MD: Mm.

EB: And there it stayed for fifty-two years [*laughter*].

JB: It could've been taken yesterday, for the quality.

EB: Yes, yes.

JB: It's beautiful.

EB: And then my cousin married a photographer and he went to see my mother. After she had lived in that house for fifty-two years, she lived in a flat near my brother for ten years. So, he saw this photograph and he said 'that's a very good photograph', and he knew all about photographs, so he said he'd like to take it to Pinewood Studios and get it copied.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, he did and he got ten copies made.

MD: Mm.

EB: Smaller, but quite a good size.

MD: Mm.

EB: So, one for each grandchild.

MD: Mm.

JB: Ahh.

EB: Of my grandchildren, yes. And, um... And they didn't charge anything.

MD: Right.

EB: They did it for free, which is very nice. So, thanks to John. But it's a... And my middle granddaughter, who's now nearly twenty-one, looked quite like that. In fact, they've got their copy in their sitting room.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And people often say, 'oh, how old was Isabelle when that was taken?'

MD: Mm, mm.

EB: And she... Wasn't her at all, it was her great-granny.

**0h 50m 01s**

MD: Aye [*laughter*].

EB: *[laughter]* Yes... So, um...

MD: And these, these paintings here aren't local scenes, are they?

EB: Oh, yes.

MD: Oh?

EB: Those are interesting. The, um... The lower- the bottom one is... They're both by Robert Cree Crawford. And, um, they came- well, as well as mother-in-law, Margery MacMinn Brown, being interested in paintings, her brother David, the doctor, never married. He collected paintings, as well. And he bought those two, Robert Cree Crawford, who was one of the Glasgow Boys.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: And the lower one, the bottom one, is a painting of the harbour in Kirkcudbright when it was still a harbour.

MD: Oh, before it was developed?

JB: Ahh.

EB: Cause you can see the boats with the masts.

MD: Mm.

EB: And you can see McLellan's Castle all covered in ivy.

MD: Right.

EB: And no bridge.

JB: Ahh.

MD: Mmhm.

EB: So, that's historically an interesting picture.

MD: Do you know the dates for that?

EB: Um... When were the Glasgow Boys? Sort of turn of the...?

MD: Well, 1880 to 1900.

EB: Yes. Well, something... Yes, don't think there's a date on them.

MD: Right.

EB: As far as I know. Have a closer look.

MD: And they're both by him?

EB: Yes.

MD: And is that Kirkcudbright?

EB: And that's coming out of Kirkcudbright, along the shore road to Borgue.

MD: Ah right.

EB: Yes.

JB: [*mumbling*]

MD: Just before it bends?

EB: Yes.

MD: Yes, yes. Where the old airboat station was, wasn't it? During the second world war it was the air rescue... ASA rescue station, it was just on the right, wasn't it?

EB: Oh right. Yes, is that where it was, there?

MD: Yeah, yeah.

EB: Ah, yes. Well, um, after David MacMinn died, aged seventy-four in the Harbour Cottage... His sister, mother of my mother-in-law, gave a lot of his pictures and things to various members of the family.

**0h 52m 12s**

MD: Right.

EB: And she gave us these two and they were completely black – you couldn't see what they were at all.

MD: Ah yeah.

EB: So, she had them cleaned.

MD: Aye.

EB: And then she gave them to us.

MD: Aye.

EB: So, they make a nice pair.

MD: Yeah. Very nice.

EB: But, um... Yes, that would've been before she was born that those were painted.

MD: Mmhm, mmhm.

EB: The... Um...

MD: Right.

EB: Yes.

MD: Well, thank you very much indeed. That's been splendid.

JB: Thank you.

EB: Well, I hope some of that's somewhat...

MD: If it's ok- if you'll allow us, we'll take a couple of photographs of some of them.

EB: Yes, yes please.



MD: That'd be wonderful.

EB: Please do, yes.

MD: Great.

EB: I'll just see if there's anything else.