

Interviewee: Niall C McGill Duncan (ND)	Interviewers: Sheena McKay (SMcK); Flora McDowall (FMcD); Caitlin Livingstone (CL)
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TITLE	<i>Niall C McGill Duncan interviewed by Sheena McKay, Flora McDowell and Caitlin Livingstone</i>
REGION	<i>Dumfries &amp; Galloway</i>
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COUNTY	<i>Dumfries &amp; Galloway</i>
TOWN	<i>Kirkcudbright</i>
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INTERVIEWER	<i>Sheena McKay, Flora McDowell and Caitlin Livingstone</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>1870 - 2018</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Niall talks about his family connections with art and Kirkcudbright. His grandfather was the manager at Dowells auction house in Edinburgh and his father haunted the salerooms buying pictures. Although his father was a civil servant he also painted and was a member of the Scottish Arts Club. Every summer the family left Edinburgh and came to Carrick Shore and Kirkcudbright. Here his father painted and the family got to know many of the Kirkcudbright artists. His father was the first subscriber to the fund to set up the Harbour Cottage Gallery. Niall came back to the area in 1969 and set up as a picture framer in Castle Douglas. In 1978 he held his first exhibition which was a great success. Niall talks about the many artists he got to know who lived and worked in, as well as those who visited, Kirkcudbright.</i>

(At the start of this interview there is much noise of sorting through papers etc. Also, throughout the interview there is a clock ticking loudly in the background.)

00.00.00

**ND:** What is the stage that we're at now so?

**SMcK:** Sorry.

**FMcD:** Oops.

**ND:** This should amuse you.

**FMcD:** My application, how funny. God Niall, you are really quite amazing.

**ND:** See, I keep everything.

**SMcK:** Certainly do.

**FMcD:** Oh!

**ND:** Horrendous isn't it? One from when you were down in Newmarket.

**FMcD:** Oh God that's amazing I, even I'd forgotten that address. You're very organised indeed.

**ND:** Oh not really this, this is only the.

**FMcD:** Tip of the iceberg.

**ND:** Oh yeah. So, right.

**SMcK:** So if you can just, just put another one in with the tenth that we're at.

**ND:** The tenth.

**SMcK:** Sign again and put the tenth that'd be great. (Softly) Can you see that's going alright?

**FMcD:** I can't really, but I think once we're going we're going, that's all - this is it.

**SMcK:** Thank you.

**FMcD:** Yep.

**ND:** I've no idea where we got to if we got anywhere.

**SMcK:** Well I can tell you from my notes.

**ND:** Everyone should be clear if we're going over things again.

**SMcK:** We were at you going to the Greengate Close, to visit.

**ND:** Oh yes. Did I bring up that one?

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** For tea?

**SMcK:** Yes, yes.

**ND:** I was about eight or nine.

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**SMcK:** Yes that's where we were. So you'd spoken about Carrick. (Softly) Are we running? Yeah.

**ND:** Yeah. So, is that on?

**FMcD:** It is.

**SMcK:** Yes, so we're on.

**ND:** I was wondering whether in actual fact as it's a Edinburgh University thing and a Ewart library thing, is it . . . safe or fair to mention other Scottish artists other than Kirkcudbright artists?

**FMcD:** Have they got a connection with Kirkcudbright?

**ND:** Some of them have.

**FMcD:** Well in that case, go for it!

**ND:** Or, or is this purely Kirkcudbright?

**FMcD:** Well it's supposed to be, but on the other hand if you've got interesting things to say we would love to hear them.

**ND:** Yeah, right, better remember.

**FMcD:** Just go for it.

**ND:** And it'll all be removed, I suppose.

**SMcK:** So, what date are we at now then in, in your...

**ND:** We, we were in the.

**SMcK:** Memoirs.

**ND:** Mid-thirties, in the late thirties.

**SMcK:** In the late thirties, right, so where are we starting now then?

**ND:** We have done the Taylor (EA Taylor) letters, bowls and mugs which are in the museum?

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** Visit for tea?

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** Merle Taylor, Con Collins, the Greengate clearance and one I didn't mention maybe was that, that Tim Jeffs (James Gunyeon Jeffs) did a bust of EA Taylor.

**SMcK:** You did.

**ND:** OK.

**SMcK:** I'm not sure if we managed to get it before the batteries conked out.

**ND:** He, he did that bust and when father saw it he said to Tim, "Tim . . . his ears are far too big" and Tim said to father "Next time you see Ernie you have a look at his ears, there enormous". Whatever happened to the bust I don't know, maybe Justine might have

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known where it went, the daughter. But that was that, the bust which he did of Fowler, which is now in the museum I believe, was cast by Charles Creswick I think it was.

**SMcK:** A bronze casting, yes?

**ND:** A bronze yep, I think that was it. Charles Creswick yeah, it was cast in Edinburgh that's why it's a bronze. The, the Jeffs were very much the . . . the friends at the time in the . . . late '30s and the early '40s, because we used to live in Dumfries; and we met the Jeffs when they moved into the Yellow Door in Kirkcudbright. It was Tim and Mary and Justine and Mrs Chalmers and the cat. And we would call in every time we were down to say hello.

And, of course, Tim Jeffs later produced the scrolls for (Dwight D) Eisenhower in Culzean Castle and also (Neil) Armstrong the American astronaut which he took over to . . . not Loch Lochmabon - wherever it was that the Armstrong's come from. And while he was taking it over there he brought it into me to have a look at and it was a carving about that high, about 15 inches high, and it was made from a piece of the old Tollbooth in Kirkcudbright and it was sculpted in a way, carved in a way, to represent an old Border Keep.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** So it was all stoned and all the rest, turrets, and in the top of it he, it lifted the lid and out came the scroll which Armstrong got. I think there are photographs about which may confirm that, I don't know. Anyway we used to go there and just at the end of the war Tim Jeffs said to father and mother when we'd gone in to visit, he said "Look what's happened there" and father said "What is it?" and he said "That car there out there, a black Ford Popular" and he said "What do you think of that?" father said "Oh very nice, brand new" he said "Well there was a ring on the door the other day and the McMurray brothers came to the door and said Mr Jeffs, Tim, there's the keys to your car " and Tim said "I haven't got a car, don't know anything about it" "But an admirer of yours has given it to you". So he got his first car a Ford Popular after the war.

**SMcK:** And who was the admirer can we?

**ND:** We never found out.

**SMcK:** Oh that's exciting, yes.

**FMcD:** That's amazing!

**SMcK:** Gosh.

**ND:** Nice, the Ford Popular with the keys.

**SMcK:** And who do you think it was Niall, have you got any?

**ND:** I, I never guessed.

**SMcK:** No.

**ND:** Pres, presumably somebody who was a much, a great admirer of Tim and his multi-skills at anything they were doing.

**SMcK:** Yes, that's a wonderful thing.

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**ND:** Including weaving and carving and lettering and all that. And I think I did mention, or may not have, but I will again, that he was a great pal of David Sainty, the lawyer.

**SMcK:** Oh yeah, uh-ha.

**ND:** And they, they went sailing at lot on Loch Ken. In 1976 the boat overturned, David Sainty clung on, so did Tim, then Tim disappeared and Tim drowned. 1976. He was found some, several days later at the barrage down the river. But what isn't perhaps generally known is that he; the, the ship on the top of the Tollbooth, weathervane ship, was produced by Tim,

he made that. And he was asked, because of his Dumfries connections, what he could do about the camera obscurer just towards the end of the war. So it was all completely derelict and didn't work. So Tim went over and completely rebuilt it so that the camera obscurer in Dumfries became a useful tourist thing. He also did, down south, with racing cars and Brooklands before the war, but the most interesting thing was at Carrick Shore there's an island called Ardwall off the, the, the beach at the isle mouth and it's quite an interesting arm. It's a domed, quite high, island and on it is a cottage which had been there for many, many years. Every summer the whole Jeffs family took the cottage for the whole summer on Ardwall. And Ardwall local name was Larry Higgs Isle, because Larry Higgs was the original resident and owner of the cottage going back to the 17 - 18 hun, early 18 hundreds. Larry Higgs was a smuggler.

**SMcK:** Ah.

**FMcD:** (Laughs)

**ND:** So as far as Tim Jeffs was concerned, it was Larry Isle.

**SMcK:** Yeah.

**ND:** Not Ardwall.

**SMcK:** Yeah.

**ND:** And when we went over to visit him at the cottage one summer Tim said to me "Come down here Niall" and my brother Rodrick, he said "Come down here and I'll show you the smugglers cache". We thought cache, oh that's interesting. So he took us down and there's a big, big stone just below the cottage which he said "Now just push that". We pushed it and in was a great tunnel right down where the smugglers kept all their illicit things from the Isle of Man. My eldest brother Alistair actually went down there and he, all he spotted was huge spiders. While, while we were there towards, this'd be the late, end, towards the end of the war, he was very proud to show us that he'd found an enormous log about 20 feet long on the rocks and he'd brought it up, set it upright and he'd spent the whole summer carving it as a totem pole.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Oh wow.

**NB:** It just looked exactly like an Indian (Native American) totem pole.

**FMcD:** Yeah, yeah.

**SMcK:** Yes, ah-ha. Did, was it tidal the island or did you have to sail out every time?

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**ND:** You, it would, tide, you could walk out.

**SMcK:** You could walk out?

**ND:** You could walk out, yeah.

**SMcK:** Yeah.

**ND:** When the tide was out you just walked across, but that, that was that. So the other artists of interest would've been . . . (EA) Hornel of course, I never met Hornel, but on one

occasion father, mother and Roderick and myself went to visit Broughton House, knocked on the door and this old lady opened the door and it was Miss Hornel and father said something or other and she said "Oh do come in, fellow artists, I'll, I'll show you around". So we all went in, we went right up to the attic which was covered with either apples or potatoes on the floor, I'm not sure. Then we went out into the garden and in the garden there was a pond with stepping stones over it and Miss Hornel sort of hopped across the stanes and she said to father and I "Be careful it's a wee bit slippy" and father slipped and got his foot wet. That was our little memory of visiting Miss Hornel while she was still alive.

**SMcK:** Yes. Uh-ha.

**ND:** Other than that we had . . . mainly interested in Miles Johnston, William Miles Johnston who had the Craft Shop in Kirkcudbright which, where he carved all sorts of things out and painted some wonderful watercolours. Really Miles Johnston and Dorothy his wife and Cecile the daughter, Antonia and there was another daughter, were always there and we went to visit them and things like that quite often and . . . Bill Johnston, as he was known locally, . . . and Dorothy his wife also painted. Incidentally Dorothy was a teacher in the Edinburgh School of Art.

**FMcD:** Right.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** In, in during just the First World War time and when she married they sacked her, because ladies where not allowed to be married in official jobs, just another little incident in current times.

**SMcK:** Yes, times have changed, uh-ha.

**ND:** But what happened there with the, during the war was that they had a visitor staying with them and he stayed with the Johnson's and he went to the various places round about. He was, he attached to the army, he went in and there's actually a photograph of him sitting in the Paul Jones Café having scone with various things, and it was Ronald Searle. And there is a book, Searle's book, which I've given to the museum showing photographs of Ronald Searle sitting in the café. And he was a great pal of Miles Johnston and his wife, but the main point really was that when he was visiting Kirkcudbright on leave from his army duties Cecile the daughter would, would, would come on leave, on holidays, summer holidays, and he was fascinated to find out where she wen, went to school and what they got up to at the school. And Cecile and one or two other local people, two other people, local people, attended St Trinnean's - just south of Edinburgh - which was headmistressed by a Miss Lee whose brother was a Dr Fraser Lee. And Alison Bradley also attended . . . the

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school with, with Cecile and others and when Cecile started describing to Ronald Searle what went on at the school it inspired Ronald Searle to do some drawings.

**SMcK:** Wonderful drawings yes.

**ND:** From then on we have the, the . . . the St Trinian's thing.

**SMcK:** Yes, the pen and ink [unclear].

**ND:** It went on for quite a while.

**FMcD:** Ah-ha.

**SMcK:** Yes. Wonderful.

**ND:** Later on he went, after the war he went on to live in France, but I don't, have, haven't followed any of his...

**SMcK:** I think they kept in touch.

**ND:** Yes.

**SMcK:** Cecile, she became a potter didn't she?

**ND:** Mm?

**SMcK:** She became a potter?

**ND:** What Cecile?

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** Yes, Cecile was. She used to come down to see quite regularly; McLachlan, she married a chap called McLachlan.

**SMcK:** That's right.

**ND:** Yeah, lived in Dick Place I think in Edinburgh. She would come down quite a bit, I've some letters from her somewhere, very nice lady. And then Tony I think he was killed, he went to Canada and the other sister I think they died there. But that was the sort of connection, but also Miles Johnston and the family had a hut at Carrick Shore and he would go down very reg, regularly to sit in the summer and weekends and painting and walking around so we saw him quite a bit there when he'd come and visit.

**SMcK:** Did he make quite a good living out of doing his cut-outs and everything?

**ND:** Oh yes, yes, yes he was very prolific.

**SMcK:** They were, yes.

**ND:** And able to do all kinds of extraordinary things. The only thing that surprised me, or not surprise me, was when I found out just a little later when my father said "But you do realise that the Johnston's were members of the Oxford Group". And I said "What's the Oxford Group?" The Oxford Group was a sort of pseudo religious group who had certain ways of doing and thinking things. They'd picked this up some years before, before the war.

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**SMcK:** Right uh-ha.

**ND:** But it might be worth thinking about what the Oxford Group was.

**SMcK:** What were they yes?

**FMcD:** Sounds very intriguing.

**SMcK:** And where any of the other artists members?

**ND:** No, not that I know of. Not that I know of no.

**SMcK:** Not that you know of no, no.

**ND:** I'm going to have a wee pause (clock strikes) just dee a bit.

**FMcD:** When you're pausing, can I ask you William Hanna Clarke - did you overlap with him at all?

**ND:** The . . . he was the one in Kirkcudbright who had that modern house up near the hospital?

**SMcK:** That's right [unclear] that [unclear].

**FMcD:** Did he? I, I mean all I know about him is his falling of a ladder and getting killed at a rather ridiculous early age.

**ND:** Yes, that's, that's, that's right I'd forgotten that story, I forgotten that tale, but we...

**FMcD:** But I've seen pictures that look as though they were painted at Carrick, I just wondered if maybe he went down there much?

**ND:** He, he I never, never met, met him at all just because he died some years ago. There is a, I think there's indication in one of the reference books as to what actually happened. But he lived in that modern building which was purpose built on the road up to the hospital in Kirkcudbright which the, the glass man from Dumfries.

**FMcD:** David Galt?

**ND:** David . . .

**FMcD:** Gulland, no?

**ND:** Gulland.

**FMcD:** Gulland.

**ND:** David, David Gulland bought.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**ND:** He got that and he told me he found one or two things relating to William Hanna Clarke.

**FMcD:** Oh right.

**ND:** But apparently he had been getting some things done for the house; he'd been down at the joiners in High Street I think it was, or behind High Street, when he was going up the steps to check on something that the joiner was making for him and the bannister

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collapsed and he fell over and was killed at a young age. But he produced some marvellous paintings.

**FMcD:** Really wonderful.

**ND:** Round Kirkcudbright, children and things. So that was that . . . what next. Presumably you can edit all this can you?

**FMcD:** We can.



**SMcK:** We can.

**FMcD:** It'll, it'll all be stored as is, but then, you know, people obviously can take bits out.

**ND:** Yeah, yeah. So we got to Charles Oppenheimer, Taylor's, the Jeffs', very interesting.

**SMcK:** And was your father painting alongside some of these people then Niall, was he?

**ND:** No, he was painting in Edinburgh at that time.

**SMcK:** Oh he was in Edinburgh. Right so you just came down to the cottage to?

**ND:** We came down every summer.

**SMcK:** Right, ah-ha.

**ND:** To a hut - not cottage.

**SMcK:** Sorry. But he painted there too yes?

**ND:** I mean, although we came from Edinburgh we called it a hut.

**FMcD:** None of that Edinburgh pretension down here, please.

**ND:** We had been in Dumfries before that for four years so. That's when we first met Jeffs and other people too.

**SMcK:** And were you aware when you were meeting all these artist, were you aware of this being something quite special?

**ND:** No. no, not particularly.

**SMcK:** You weren't?

**ND:** My father was, but I, you know, father felt in his element because he was around about people of similar thoughts.

**SMcK:** Yes. Yes. So he was alive and enjoying it, loving it. But to you it was something perfectly normal was it?

**ND:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah it was just normal childhood growing up from five, six; well from one year old right up to . . . 1950's when we finished going up and down. Even during the war we would go down by train, obviously, to Kirkcudbright.

**SMcK:** Yes.

00.18.29

**ND:** Get off the station. But there were the odd occasions a little later, just after the war, when were able to get, hire a car, which was unusual.

**SMcK:** From a garage in Kirkcudbright or something?

**ND:** No, a garage in Edinburgh.

**SMcK:** Oh right and drive all the way down.

**ND:** Drive the way down.

**SMcK:** Right.

**ND:** But we usually tried to get down for Easter and all summer . . . great memories of the whole place. Got millions, there's a photograph, before the war, of the family and there's Joey Sassoon again.

**FMcD:** That's absolutely fantastic!

**SMcK:** It's wonderful isn't it? Are you the one in the green Niall?

**ND:** The weeist one, I expect.

**FMcD:** At the front?

**ND:** I expect so.

**SMcK:** Is that you?

**ND:** No, that's my brother Rodrick.

**SMcK:** Oh right, is this?

**ND:** I, I think I'm there at all. Yes, that's me just there.

**SMcK:** Oh right, oh you're in behind. Oh you're tiny. Oh you're a babe in arms.

**FMcD:** Oh yes, sweet.

**ND:** There's another one. Every, every weekend at Carrick there would be a van arrive from Gatehouse (of Fleet) from the shop that was in Gatehouse called Frolanie's (spelling?), Frolanie's was an Italian ice cream shop and sweetie shop. And Mr Frolanie would bring the van down every Sunday to the Carrick Shore and we'd be on the beach or somewhere like that and all of a sudden a shout would go up "It's Frolanie's, it's Frolanie's" and we'd all rush up and get an ice cream. There's another picture with actually the van and the man himself in it.

**FMcD:** And was the beach busy, I mean was it like now, where loads and loads of people were there or just really a, a little gang of you?

**ND:** No, no, no just, just, just the, the, the few residents in there that's all.

**FMcD:** What's that?

**SMcK:** And there weren't many huts then?

00.20.22

**ND:** No.

**SMcK:** No, no.

**ND:** The Sassoon's had a hut . . . couple of odd ones, Miles Johnston had one and then there was the minister's hut, the Scout hut.

**SMcK:** Right.

**ND:** Things like that, but nothing like now at all.

**SMcK:** No.

**ND:** That's why I don't like it now at all. It's not the same, entirely different. But that was that, we got side tracked then didn't we.

**SMcK:** So that's taken us up to about 1951, you said when you were back in Edinburgh?

**ND:** Yeah. I suppose so . . . the, the other artist who was always very nice was Jack Hastings, who had a vegetable and fruit shop in Kirkcudbright.

**FMcD:** I remember that, yes, yes, I mean.

**ND:** And Jack Hastings was a terribly nice man and painted some magnificent watercolours round about. All very well controlled watercolours, but still showing the scenery. There're really very good. Used to know him quite well, he would come down and visit on occasions. Then we would have a connection every now and again with one of the Edinburgh artists, Alick Riddell Sturrock.

**SMcK:** Oh yes.

**ND:** The Sturrock had a studio at Gatehouse at the old Anwoth, the old ruined Anwoth Church, there's a cottage there and that was his studio. And he would come down every summer and paint round Gatehouse and Kirkcudbright and all the rest of it. But . . . yup, and of these people, such as that, we always had visits when they came up to Edinburgh they would call in and call for tea, so, usually a Sunday or something like that.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** And they'd come up for tea, the Jeffs did . . . Mi John, Miles Johnston and Jack Hastings we did and the Sturrock's came in. We had other visits from other Scottish artists like Mervyn Glass and . . . Sir William MacTaggart used to come for tea, twice I think.

**FMcD:** Mm.

**SMcK:** Wow.

**ND:** Father knew them all through the Scottish Arts Club and at that time he was very interested in painting, he was collecting pictures a lot.

**SMcK:** Your father was collecting?

**ND:** Yeah.

**SMcK:** So was he buying from, he was buying from these artist that he was meeting?

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**ND:** He was always running to salerooms ,yes, and the pictures were going quite reasonably, but he, he preferred to buy pictures than buy us shoes so he.

**SMcK:** Well I can understand that.

**ND:** One of the ones he came back with was a very nice (Samuel) Peploe of a vase of flowers with oranges and things in it. It was at one of the prize possessions he had, he loved that. I think he paid about £150 for that in about 1934 or 5.

**SMcK:** Yeah.

**ND:** It was later sold. Another one we had was a very large (Francis) Cadell which, a study which I can still see sitting over the fireplace in Edinburgh. But one of his closest associates in the Edinburgh Group was . . . what is his name now . . . I've got it in here somewhere . . . I'm beginning to wander . . .

**SMcK:** Donald Moody?

**ND:** No, Gillies, Gillies, Sir William Gillies.

**SMcK:** Oh Gillies.

**FMcD:** Ah.

**ND:** Willie Gillies was at.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** At Edinburgh Art College.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** And he taught there with Maxwell and Johnnie Maxwell from Dalbeattie. And father was a great pal of William Gillies and we used to out to Temple to visit him.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Oh dear.

**ND:** Where he lived with his old mother in a, one of the cottages in Temple village in Gorebridge way. We'd go out there quite regularly. As a result of that on one, for one or two years we had 11 Gillies watercolours on the wall. All over the place; he was constantly changing the pictures in the various rooms. So we had the, the, the, the advantage of good art all round us [unclear].

**SMcK:** You did, yes.

**ND:** And of course that, a lot of that came from his con, contacts within the Scottish Arts Club where he was, go fairly regularly.

**FMcD:** Was that thriving in those days?

**ND:** Oh yes.

**FMcD:** Because it's, it's quite I think it's find, finding it quite hard to keep going these days. Oh there it is, have you ever been?

**SMcK:** Well I, I went in the summer time they had the portrait exhibition on. It was fabulous.

00.24.53

**ND:** Yeah.

**SMcK:** But it does feel a little bit . . . yes, it feels like it's struggling a bit, I would say, yeah.

**FMcD:** I can imagine it must've been amazing when it was in full, you know, really a social hub.

**SMcK:** It's vibrant, yes.

**ND:** Oh yes [unclear] wonderful, and wonderful concerts they had; wonderful singers, Italian singers and the pianists and things like that they had in the, in the and there's pictures of various artists in that memorial book, memories book.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**FMcD:** Isn't that wonderful.

**SMcK:** Did Gillies ever come down to Kirkcudbright or this area?

**ND:** I believe he did come down once, on one occasion, but he was a bit limited because he had to look after his old mother, he never married or anything so.

**SMcK:** No.

**ND:** He lived in Temple and other friends of ours lived there. Funnily enough the Arts Club there, next door to it was 25 Rutland Square which was the offices of Tom, TC Gardiner & Company, they were accountants and they also lived in Temple.

**SMcK:** Right.

**ND:** So we'd go down and see them and we would go down and see . . . Gillies as well. But my brother and sister were, brother and sister-in-law were both taught by Gillies in Edinburgh Art College.

**SMcK:** In, at the College. Yes.

**FMcD:** How wonderful.

**ND:** When they were there. So they knew it quite well. But one of the artists who was most prominent there was, he didn't come to Kirkcudbright but, he actually may have done in, in the previous century, was William Miller Frazer. He was an Edinburgh artist who, he lived in Nelson Street up Abercromby I think, number nine Nelson Street. A very prolific Scottish painter and he actually exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy for 70 consecutive years.

**FMcD:** (Softly) Wow.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Wow.

**ND:** And naturally father, we knew him very well, he used to come to visit regularly at home and then we would go and visit him too. And he always wore a sort of cap thing, a sleeping cap, I don't know what they call them now, funny caps. But he was quite an interesting bloke and a wonderful painter in his own way, a bit derive, not derived but following on from the French artist (Jean-Baptiste-Camille) Corot I would have thought in some of his works. So we had a collection of his pictures, you know, pretty good. That was Frazer.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Oh did he oh.

00.27.19

**ND:** But back to the Kirkcudbright group, I don't know, both Alastair and Ann Dallas who were both remarkable artists living in the house next to the Tollbooth.

**SMcK:** And when did you meet them Niall?

**ND:** I, I knew him much better later when I came down to Castle Douglas in the '70s.

**SMcK:** Right.

**ND:** It was Alastair, Ann and Peter I think. And he would come into the shop, gallery, in Castle Douglas and we'd have long chats about things. He also has some very interesting pictures in Gracefield which, good ones; I mean he was a very good painter, but a bit of an irascible man.

**SMcK:** Oh was he?

**ND:** Yes.

**SMcK:** In what way?

**ND:** Opinionated, perhaps.

**SMcK:** OK.

**ND:** He was telling me of the time when he was up at Loch Ness and produced for me the drawing he made, on the spot, of the Loch Ness monster.

**SMcK:** Right.

**ND:** [Unclear] I've got copies of that. He said "Oh yes it was definitely there, definitely there. And that's what it was like". He was quite a character but.

**FMcD:** What was she like?

**ND:** Ann, a very quiet, lovely lady who painted magnificent paintings of roses and all beautifully done. Underestimated as an artist perhaps because under the shadow of.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Of, of him.

**ND:** She, she was actually a very interesting painter, but I think perhaps his prominence as an artist there or his self-indulgent prominence put her slightly in the background. But I used to talk quite a lot to their son; he would come in quite regularly, Peter, I don't know if he's still going strong.

**FMcD:** He's still going. I don't know how strongly. He's definitely still going.

**ND:** Is he. He's a big tall bloke. We used to go and visit him, he would, we would go in and say hello and things like that in, into their Toll, their Tollbooth house which was always a bit of a muddle.

**FMcD:** They were, were they painting and showing work outside of the area, or were they really producing work and selling it in Kirkcudbright? I mean, I know they did lots of things for people like Christmas cards, Ann did.

**ND:** Yes.

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**FMcD:** And they did the colouring-in books; they did some wonderful birthday cards.

**ND:** Yup.

**FMcD:** I've got one or two of those; all that sort of thing. But were they actually producing work and showing it in Edinburgh, or other parts of Scotland?

**ND:** I don't, I don't think so. I don't, they, they, I don't know the, the actual distribution of his, of his work or, but I just assumed they were very much local Kirkcudbright artists working locally and making their living that way.

**FMcD:** And probably a good one because there was lots of people coming and buying his paintings.

**ND:** Yup. Oh he, he did a lot of interesting things, but there are some records for him in Gracefield which should be followed up. And they've got some pictures there.

**SMcK:** But he didn't show at the RSA or anything?

**ND:** Mm?

**SMcK:** He didn't show at the RSA or anything like that?

**ND:** He may have done.

**SMcK:** He may, all right.

**ND:** I don't have a record of that, but I think he thought himself as a very much a local, local oriented man. I don't know where he came from although I did, I did know in the past, but I've forgotten.

**FMcD:** They had a shop as well didn't they at the end of that building?

**ND:** Yeah.

**FMcD:** I can vaguely remember that window was a shop. Yes.

**ND:** Yeah, that's right, that's right, yeah, a funny window in it, yeah, a funny window, yeah. I think the floors were all collapsing upstairs too. It was quite a place, a bit of a dump. But that was that.

**FMcD:** Can I just ask you before we go on, I mean, these people that we've been talking about the Jeffs' and the Dallas' and so on, I mean, did they live a sort of Bohemian life, or were they basically living just the same life as everybody else in Kirkcudbright; you get up in the morning, you do your job, you have your tea, you go to bed and then you start all over again?

**ND:** Very much like that, yes. I think the main insight into what they may have been like is in Dorothy Sayers' book *The Five Red Herrings*.

**FMcD:** Right.

**ND:** If you've ever read it.

**FMcD:** I have.

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**ND:** Yeah. It indicates the various big difficulties each artist had with the other and the confrontations and some days they would pass each other in the street and some days they would talk to each other and it went on like that. But Dorothy Sayers depicted the, the group of artists as being perhaps like any group of artists anywhere. They could be friendly

one moment, not speak to each other the next. It was quite easy and the depiction she made of the one who, who was Hornel in the, in the book is perhaps a little bit off.

**SMcK:** Do you mean she was off you, oh right. So you don't.

**ND:** But maybe it's not the Hornel we remember. It's not the Hornel we read about and things like that. But he was, she, he was portrayed in her *Five Red Herrings* as being isolated and self-opinionated and very much on his own. But I think that was slightly wrong, maybe she'd met him and didn't like him or something like that.

**SMcK:** Right.

**ND:** But there and I think I showed you before I had a copy of this thing here . . . which . . . I don't know if I've got it in . . . I probably have it in this . . . there, it was the old.

**FMcD:** Oh the video.

**ND:** Yup.

**FMcD:** Oh Lord Peter Wimsey, gosh I remember those.

**ND:** Yup. I might have it in this, but I can't remember.

**FMcD:** Do you remember this?

**SMcK:** Yes I do. Can you still play it Niall?

**ND:** [Unclear]

**FMcD:** Must have the right gadgets.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** [Unclear] machine, but I, I don't use these now.

**SMcK:** No.

**ND:** Because I get too confused with all the buttons you're supposed to press.

**FMcD:** I don't [unclear].

**SMcK:** So do we think that they were quite competitive then the artists, there had to a competitive element?

**ND:** [Unclear] It would appear so, it would appear so. Obviously not all of them were like that, but the one that was interesting was Oppenheimer who was a special constable.

**SMcK:** Ah yes.

**ND:** In Kirkcudbright at the time and he . . . perhaps was a sort of controlling interest, you never know about what they were doing. He, he, he lived next door to Hornel at the time and I think I did mention before that in his letter which he wrote to father in mid '40s he said

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that "Note that we have moved from 16 High Street" or 14 High Street the one next to thing "And we are now in a new house next to the Poors House". I think I said that before.



**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** But he, being a special constable, there is a unverified, but probably correct story, about Oppenheimer on, on duty as a special constable in Kirkcudbright. Before the war they were wondering how, how to produce a new motif for the police. Rather than the bon, the, the, the helmet they wanted the hat and he doodled away and produced the black and white square thing.

**FMcD:** The little chequerboard pattern?

**ND:** Yeah. You can ask David Collins about this, he would probably know more. But the story goes that it was he who designed that and it was then adopted by all the police forces all over after that. It's, so it's, it's worth verifying; it's a nice story, but I don't know whether it's exact or not, but he's supposed to have done that.

**FMcD:** Did you know Oppenheimer?

**ND:** Oh yes.

**FMcD:** So, I mean, he always seems, looking at his pictures, I don't mean his paintings, but photographs of him, as if was slightly grand and aloof, perhaps, from a lot of the other painters that were in Kirkcudbright. He was a bit sort of big time.

**ND:** Well yes, yes, yes, yes that's true. Background was different; his background was interesting because he came from a firm in Manchester, a family in Manchester who'd come over many years before and they had a, a ceramics tile business in Manchester producing Victorian tiles and things. I've got a book with a reference to it somewhere. And he came up from there and married and he was in the First World War, which made the contact with father because father was also through the First World War.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**ND:** So that was, that was the sort of contact they had. But when they ceased to rent the property from Hornel which was next door in High Street, they moved to, now I forget the name of the place now, the house outside on the Tongland road, a big house on the right hand side I think. And it was built where the Kirkcudbright Poor House was.

**FMcD:** Oh right.

**ND:** And it was still there in the late '30s – '40s so in Kirkcudbright if you were really poor you could go and live next to Charles Oppenheimer. But one of the other things that he insisted on when he got there was that he couldn't see through the windows, a beautiful view of the Dee. So he got the big, very big still existing glass company, I've forgotten their name now. And they approached; he approached them and he said "What about producing a glass that doesn't muddle up the view". And they said "Oh we've got something like that on the go right now, a form of plate glass". So he had plate glass installed in all the windows that looked down at the Dee so that he could record accurately when the weather wasn't right what he was to do. The other . . . claim to his interest was that indoors a, a group got

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together, two men in particular I think it was or two families who wanted to produce the Gallery Power Scheme running all the way down to Tongland. And in order to do that they

had to approach all the landowners and try and persuade them that they were going to flood the Dee and that certain of their lands would have to be used for this. And in order to encourage the landowners to agree . . . they thought it would be a good idea to commission one of the Kirkcudbright artists to do a series of paintings of before and after the power scheme was installed.

**SMcK:** Yes, yes.

**ND:** They went to one or two, Hornel was one I believe, and they went to one or two of them and they all said no, they couldn't do it, but Oppenheimer said yes. And so he produced these magnificent paintings of the Kirkcudbright dam and all the rest of it all round.

**SMcK:** Yes, so that was a commission from the?

**ND:** From the, the, the people who.

**SMcK:** Hydro Electric or whatever yeah.

**ND:** No, well it was private.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**ND:** I've got all that down here somewhere too.

**SMcK:** Right.

**FMcD:** It must've been a very sizable commission?

**SMcK:** Yes!

**ND:** Yeah. Well you'll have seen these big paintings [unclear].

**FMcD:** I have, there enormous, yeah.

**ND:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**FMcD:** Was, how was he thought of back in those days, I mean in terms of an artist?

**ND:** Oh he exhibited widely in London, everywhere, all over.

**FMcD:** So he was really British standard?

**ND:** In the British standard, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**FMcD:** Very, yes very recognised.

**ND:** So apart from Hornel he would be considered perhaps the most prominent of the artists.

**FMcD:** He got very involved in the Harbour Cottage, didn't he?

**ND:** Yes.

**FMcD:** Getting that going.

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**ND:** Yes that's, that's when that started. When the Harbour Cottage started of course . . . he wrote to father and said that they were proposing to do this. The letters are in the museum they were [unclear]. Proposing to do this and it would require a subscription from various interested parties to get the thing off the ground. So father wrote back with a cheque for five pounds and he got a letter back from Charles Oppenheimer, but he also had a letter back from Eric Forbes, who was the accountant involved in it. It'd be Lesley Forbes' father

**FMcD:** Forbes' father, yes.

**ND:** Saying thanking farther for his subscription of five guineas, or whatever it was, and to note that it was the very first subscription they had received for the Harbour Cottage Galleries.

**FMcD:** Isn't that fantastic! Isn't that fantastic!

**ND:** For conformation of that David Devereux has access to that or Ann Bottomley in the museum.

**FMcD:** Isn't that wonderful?

**SMcK:** Fabulous. Gosh . . . so that was in, what date was that, was in the '50s was it?

**FMcD:** That be late '50s I suppose '57 or something.

**SMcK:** Late '50s the Harbour Cottage.

**ND:** That'd be in the yes just the late '40s early '50s. Was it '57?

**FMcD:** I think it, I think it was '57 because they've just.

**ND:** '56, yes.

**FMcD:** They've just had an anniversary.

**SMcK:** 60 years yes.

**ND:** So it would, it would be '57.

**SMcK:** '57 yes, I think so.

**ND:** 60 years. Yep.

**SMcK:** And did your father exhibit there?

**ND:** He may have done, I can't remember. I don't know whether, oh he was always down every time we went to Kirkcudbright from Carrick, which would maybe be once a week, we would always go and visit. But the other people we visited regularly were Jock and Jean Mitchell of Osborne's and they were, they were the real, part of the real characters of Kirkcudbright at this time, Jock Mitchell and all the rest of it with Robert his son and Jane and Mary - late, latecomer. And they had been working away quietly after the war because Jock was in the navy. And friends had turned up that they knew quite well at the time and they saw that Jock could do with a little boost, a lift, in setting himself up in business after coming out of the war. So in the late '40s they decided they would acquire a property for him and set him up and that was Maurice Griffiths' father-in-law.

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**FMcD:** Oh yes.

**ND:** You remember Maurice?

**FMcD:** Yes, yes I remember Maurice yes, yes.

**ND:** Well Maurice Griffiths and the family all had, they had a hut down at Carrick Shore called the Barnacle and we used to play around with them too so we knew them quite well. Jo Griffiths, the mother, her family came from the Rutherford Manse in Gatehouse and her name was McGlashan so it was silver river and McGlashan and all the rest of it. She was born and brought up in Gatehouse and met David down in Durham, where he was senior musical and then he was latterly in charge of music at Merchiston Castle and wrote for the Scotsman and thinks like that, its Maurice and Jacqueline and the other kids. And the Griffiths eventually got a house out near Queensferry which we used to visit regularly every Sunday, Scotstoun House. But, anyway that started Jock Mitchell in his business of Osborne's.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**ND:** And it was Osborne's and they moved to various places at different times and now the other - Castle Street.

**FMcD:** That's right, yeah.

**ND:** And, of course, we just heard that Robert died the other day so [unclear].

**FMcD:** Sad.

**ND:** And Robert, Robert because the Griffiths were so interested in, in giving Jock and Jean a lift up they, they, they got Robert to go to school with us in George Watson's in Edinburgh. So Robert came up, but we called him Alec then, so wee Alec would come up to Edinburgh and he was about two years under me at school and every break we had, our house was right next door to the school; into the garden, over the wall you were into the school. So what happened every coffee time a whole gang of us would come, jump over the wall, into the kitchen and have a cup of coffee while we were waiting, and Alec was one of them with, with various others. That was that.

**FMcD:** What about your father's painting at this sort of time?

**ND:** He was painting, well he had started off . . . 1896 so when he was about 14, 15 which would be . . . what it is 1910 that'd be 14, yes about 1912 or 13 he was at school at Trinity Academy in Leith where the family were working with the shipping line. This is, this is his father here, he was master of a ship from the Currie Line in Leith. And he went to Trinity Academy with his brother Jim and in leaving school he went to, having done well, he went to Edinburgh Art College in 19 late 14, 1913-14-15 around that time and that's what he wanted to do. Unfortunately the war came along so that was him out of that. But he always was interested in painting, I mean, there are some pictures I've got; there's a little one he did a copy when he was very young of a French painting. I've got some more through there, pictures he painted, but these are all some of his early. But towards the end of his life at Carrick Shore I can remember him saying to me, this would be in the, in the

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'70s, he's saying, he said "Oh yes I'm painting, I painted all the wrong things, I was painting to try and please people".

**SMcK:** Ah, really?

**ND:** And of course he did, because out of his paintings he produced dozens and dozens of postcards which he got the idea from his Edinburgh artist friend William Mervyn Glass . . . who had produced . . . (clock strikes) . . . Scottish postcards and things like that. And so father thought "Right" so he went to Pillans & Wilson in Edinburgh and an enormous number of his pictures were reproduced as postcards.

**FMcD:** Yes, I remember the postcards, yes.

**ND:** Some of, yeah, some of which I had.

**SMcK:** Did you still have them in?

**ND:** Re, reprinted in Castle Douglas [unclear].

**SMcK:** Yes.

**FMcD:** Nice.

**ND:** And now there all sitting there waiting for somebody to do something with them so. But it was Meryn Glass who started the ball rolling on that one. So he, as I say, produced all of.

**SMcK:** And what do you think he would have chosen if he hadn't?

**ND:** Well on one occasion he had a . . . he had lots of friends in Edinburgh with family up for well what's her name again? He was a fellow inspector of taxes I think. His father was an inspector of taxes on one occasion this friend came up to him – saw him somewhere - he said "You'll never guess I have bought in Dowells a magnificent French painting, I do want you to see it". And father said "Oh yes certainly I'll look at that". So, McIntyre was his name I think, Ian; and so father said, went over, went over to see them and it was the picture and father tried to keep a straight face because he'd painted it and signed it Maloux (spelling?) because he was so fed up painting it and his friend, poor friend, had bought the bloody thing.

**FMcD:** Oh dear.

**SMcK:** But had good taste.

**ND:** But the connection in Edinburgh was with Dowells because my grandfather, that's my mother's father, he was managing director of Dowells in Edinburgh up to 1923 when he died. He'd started off with them in 1870 or 1880, 1880 or something like that. So that's how the connection to Dowells came about. He was always around the salerooms and the arts and towards the end when he retired from the, the Civil Service, Inland Revenue, he was approached to see if he would become the secretary for the RSA in the, in the Mound Galleries. And he was considering quite a bit and he went down to have a look and he came back one day and mother said to him "Well what're you going to take the job?" And he said "No, it's underground, there's no light I can't see a thing". So he didn't take it.

**SMcK:** Ah he didn't take it, yeah.

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**ND:** So these connections are linked for all with people we had met, people we knew and just formed the, the background to our upbringing so it was instilled in us.

**SMcK:** Yes. And did they filter through to when you had the gallery then in Castle Douglas?

**ND:** Must've done, it, it was always there it was all gradually coming out and forwards it must be, must be. I suppose every, everybody has influenced by the surroundings when we're growing up and you were farming, hence you're a farmer.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**ND:** So all that was there. We all did art a school, of course.

**SMcK:** And were any of them still around when you had the gallery, did they, did, where they still...

**ND:** Yeah, I used to get visits from.

**SMcK:** ... come in?

**ND:** Yup, yeah. I used to get visits from . . . Johnny Maxwell, I hadn't met him much but I think I met him once. But the Sassoon's would come in and Dallas' and then there was Anna Hotchkis and Lena Alexander, I, I mean, Anna, Anna Hotchkis I'd, I'd only met her once, but Lena Alexander came in several times, she was, she was very interesting lady a very good painter done with Kirkcudbright gouache. She had, didn't she have a showroom in Castle Street at one time?

**FMcD:** She had a dress shop.

**ND:** A dress shop! That's right.

**FMcD:** Alexa.

**ND:** Alexa the dress shop.

**FMcD:** It was very swish indeed. Paris styles, it really was, yeah, no she actually went to Paris and brought them.

**SMcK:** Really. And was she always, did she always look very?

**FMcD:** Oh I don't remember her, but I do remember going in to Alexa's as a little girl.

**ND:** Yeah, she was a very fashionable lady a very nice lady. I think she had dark hair I'm not sure, flourishing dark.

**FMcD:** When was it that you came down to Castle Douglas Niall and decided, or, when did you decide to set up the gallery?

**ND:** In '69 I had to find something to do because the businesses in Bute had gone, so I thought right I can either, either go to Edinburgh or I can go to Torquay or I can go to gallery. I don't know why I chose those two.

**SMcK:** Hobson's choice.

**ND:** And eventually gallery won so I can down to Castle Douglas and tried to find a place. The place I found was called Granny's.

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**FMcD:** Yes, with the thing on the window.

**ND:** Yep, yep.

**SMcK:** What, what had Granny's been then, sounded like a boutique.

**ND:** A boutique which had been started by a chap from London who married a local girl and he had been so impressed with the goings-on in Carnaby Street that he thought Castle Douglas needed something like that.

**FMcD:** It was like that, it was a real groovy boutique.

**SMcK:** Was it?

**FMcD:** Yeah it was.

**SMcK:** Why did he call it Granny's?

**ND:** Goodness knows.

**SMcK:** Anyway.

**FMcD:** That's what was cool, in the '60s.

**SMcK:** Yes, probably.

**ND:** When it was there it had Granny's written over the door and all the windows were blacked-out and inside were these plastic mirrors and everything was black and spotlights everywhere and all that. So I was only interested in getting something off the ground which was picture framing so I just kept the name. But the decoration on the window which was circular and various things on it had taken two chaps who lived in the Douglas Arms for the period, taken a week to put in on the window and it took me half an hour to take it off.

**SMcK:** To get it.

**ND:** But it's still there.

**FMcD:** I was going to say, the ghost of it is still there or if you get the right climatic conditions, you can still see all these lines and Granny's - it's amazing.

**ND:** [Unclear]

**SMcK:** Ah, they had the last laugh.

**FMcD:** They had the last laugh.

**ND:** Yep, crazy.

**FMcD:** It was a good decision because obviously the business ran and ran and then you got into the actual picture side of it as well.

**ND:** Well that would be the, the, the, the meeting of, with Patrick's father, Bernard Bourne, when he came in to get something framed so we chatted away and then Patrick was still at Edinburgh University at the time so. When he came down, he came in said hello so we chatted away and Patrick was interested in getting things off the ground and he had a small

place in Edinburgh and then moved onwards. And then in 1978 he got this windfall from Rhodesia

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from the Faed family who suggested that there was a store in Edinburgh which had an awful lot of stuff in it; would he have a look at it and see what he could do and found out all the Faed paintings and things were in, in there.

**FMcD:** Very memorable first exhibition.

**ND:** First exhibition, yes.

**FMcD:** I was there.

**ND:** [Unclear]

**SMcK:** Oh Flora how exciting, it must've been incredibly exciting really.

**FMcD:** It was really something, it was an amazing exhibition.

**ND:** Well yeah, because Patrick had done all that and we got it all sorted out and it was to be the first exhibition he did all the invitations printed the whole thing out. And we got a list of people that we would think might be interested so we sent out the invitations to everybody. And Patrick had said to me "Well look this is a test exhibition because we'll try it out, but I suspect most of it will have to go to Edinburgh to be sold". So while it was on I can still recall going round and seeing people where very interested in the red mark for, appearing and there was one picture which Kenneth McDowell was interested in at the time, I think.

**FMcD:** That's right enough.

**ND:** And . . . he decided to get it, to buy it and when Patrick looked around after the thing was gone I said "There's not left for you to sell in Edinburgh now, is there?". We'd sold nearly all that was in the gallery.

**SMcK:** I'm so glad.

**FMcD:** It was absolutely amazing and that was the start of these Galloway exhibitions and in it's pomp people were queuing up the street, weren't they? It was the event...

**ND:** It was amazing.

**FMcD:** ... to be at.

**ND:** It was something new which hadn't happened before in Castle Douglas.

**FMcD:** It was really new.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**FMcD:** And everybody came.

**SMcK:** And were there any galleries in Kirkcudbright at the time or were you, were you out on your own?

**ND:** The Harbour Cottage.



**SMcK:** Yes but -

**FMcD:** Nothing like this.

00.54.10

**SMcK:** Nothing no, no.

**ND:** There was nothing else. No, nothing else, just the Harbour Cottage.

**SMcK:** So you were the first?

**ND:** So, the Harbour Cottage. Incidentally I had gone when I came down to look for a place here I wanted Kirkcudbright. As I had arrived firstly thinking at Carrick, going to Carrick and then [unclear] well I'm going to Kirkcudbright well I saw the Mitchell's and I saw various other people and looked for a possible place to start up in Kirkcudbright. Donald Rudd had a place, but he wouldn't let me have it and Jock Mitchell said "Och no you don't want, nothing'll happen here, you don't really want to start here". So I went to Gatehouse where I knew the postmistress and her husband, what's her name again, very well and I said that I was down I was looking for a place to set up in business in Kirkcudbright, or as a picture framing things like that, and pictures. And she said "Oh you don't want to go to Kirkcudbright, the only place with any chance is Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbright's dead, you'll never get anywhere in Kirkcudbright". So I then moved to Castle Douglas and I saw couple of lawyer's there and oh various places and. I saw Granny's and I said "That's a no bloody good". So I went back to Rothesay, to Bute. Came down again and there was nothing else - the present travel agent's in, just up from the gallery on that side, what, I forget their name now, but they were trav, I had a look at that and I was going to take that over but couldn't get it at the last moment so I had to settle for Granny's. And that was that. So that was 1971.

**SMcK:** So in '71 the attitude was that there wasn't a great art scene in Kirkcudbright then, you were being told to go to Castle Douglas?

**ND:** In Kirkcudbright, oh yes, it was still going strong there.

**SMcK:** Was it?

**ND:** But it was . . . can, I can't, I can't use the word incestuous can I, but it was a wee bit, a wee bit.

**FMcD:** You probably can.

**ND:** A wee bitty that way.

**FMcD:** Closed shop?

**ND:** Mm?

**FMcD:** Was a closed shop.

**ND:** Yes.

**SMcK:** Was it?

**ND:** Yes, yes, yes they all had their own status and Tommy Lochhead and all the others all had their own status and knew what they were doing and. But it, at that time you could say

that it had been an effort on the part of Scottish painters mainly, to find a place outside the cities because in the 1890s and 1900s and right through 1920s, '30s, '40s every town, Glasgow included was, the air was awful, the fogs were awful, the smog was awful, they,

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they didn't see the light and they came down to somewhere like Kirkcudbright and it was light. And it was fantastic, rather, as the English artists had gone to St Ives.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Yes.

**ND:** Suddenly saw the light, probably reflected off the sea and things like that, but that, that would enable them to paint, the likes where they wanted to go. And when Hornel's family came back from Australia that's what he just stuck out at, but he was connected obviously more with the Glasgow Group. But that, that's what brought them to Kirkcudbright, an effort to get away from the city's filth, smog and.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Yeah.

**ND:** And horrible weather . . . I think . . . light.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**SMcK:** Light.

**ND:** Let there be light.

**SMcK:** Yes, let there be light.

**ND:** Ah. Has anyone heard of [unclear]?

**FMcD:** Well I think you've done very well.

**SMcK:** I think you've done well today, yes.

**ND:** What else will we talk, what else were we saying?

**FMcD:** I'm, I'm just wondering if there's anything else that you feel you want to tell us at this stage?

**ND:** (Softly) There might be, I don't know.

**FMcD:** How do you think life as far as the arts goes has changed in this area, Dumfries and Galloway?

**ND:** In what period?

**FMcD:** In the time, in the time when you've.

**SMcK:** Been involved.

**FMcD:** Well obviously as a child you probably didn't notice that much, but from when you.

**ND:** From 1940s '50s onward?

**FMcD:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**ND:** Well it's entirely different picture, entirely different, right up to the 1980s I would say we had a kinda traditional approach to painting and the arts. You went to art school and mostly you would come out as a teacher, that was the only option you had, whether it was Edinburgh or Glasgow. In the '70s . . . right through and then the '80s and I think from the '80s - '90s you started to see a new thing occurring which was . . . people were beginning

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to look forward rather than backwards, as far as painting and the arts were concerned. And you had more people who had trained in art, art colleges and trained in art, who were thinking that rather than teach they would like to paint. And so they would paint things which would appeal to the present viewers rather than the old fashion viewers. Modern art, colourful, and you have people like Jolomo (John Lowrie Morrison) and all the rest of it who started another trend, high coloured art and there was one in, what's his name, in – very nice fellow - in Dalbeattie who.

**FMcD:** Jim Sturgeon.

**ND:** Jim Sturgeon yes, he was an interesting, quite, painter and then he suddenly got the Jolomo idea and started bashing out in washes of colour and all that, and all that and the same with . . . the . . . Val, not Valerie; oh Valerie of course was different entirely she was doing things entirely different things; have I already said that? Valerie Sadler.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**ND:** But then she was old school.

**FMcD:** Yes.

**ND:** But moving slightly into the. So since the '70s - '80s things have gone extraordinarily in to.

**SMcK:** The teaching changed, I think didn't it, in the colleges?

**ND:** Teaching. Yup. Yup.

**SMcK:** They didn't teach in the, what you and I would call the old way.

**ND:** Drawing and painting was not important now.

**SMcK:** Yes exactly uh-ha.

**ND:** Figure studies and things like that were no longer important it's just. So it has changed and it would appear to me now there's an awful lot of "art" for sale in an awful lot of "galleries" all over Scotland, which didn't exist 60 years ago, weren't, just weren't, there.

**SMcK:** And what about the new gallery opening and things like that, do you feel that the future's looking good?

**ND:** Well I have.

**SMcK:** I mean for people enjoying art and, and coming here and, and appreciating the, the history?

**ND:** I think presently in the like, in the mood of the present moment, I think people have very little time to enjoy anything - particularly art. I think from the point of view of Kirkcudbright in the 2000s when it started off the possibility of setting up a gallery to commemorate the

Kirkcudbright art clan, it was set off by a group of people we know about. It's taken a long time and my impression is that part of the reason for the slow approach to the new Kirkcudbright gallery has been that the people have been distracted by other things. And I don't think "art" as such is terribly important in Kirkcudbright or in any other town. People are distracted by the way society has gone, the way money has gone, the way things are

01.01.48

happening; it's all change. We look back on history, everything was always all change so we presume, produce . . . we're proceeding towards a different type of society and whether old art will be good for us or not. If you go back to the 1970s '80s and the thought of a new gallery in Kirkcudbright with the magnificent Scottish paintings that we have, terrific; wouldn't it be a wonderful idea. I'm not so sure now-a-days that it's going to get the response that it's hoped for, fingers crossed. Because I don't think the general public really have time, they've got too much time doing other things, being absorbed by other things. There a lot depends on individuals it's possibly, will succeed because there are older people who will enjoy it as we found out in Castle Douglas that it was the older people who preferred the old traditional art. In, in those days we, we would have shows were we could, with Alison Bradley and Chapel Antiques, we would have wonderful antique furniture things like tables, chairs and all kinds of beautiful cabinets and we would all make very good money because people really wanted them. Those things now, it was called, now called brown furniture.

**SMcK:** (Softly) Nobody wants it.

**ND:** The trade has completely collapsed for it, nobody wants it any more, everyone's Ikea minded now so it's all different. And I think the same applies to art . . . as the older people die, the older art dies with them. We've got, the next stage like the, the Burrell collection in Glasgow, which is going through a very important renovation, in an effort to stimulate public interest in art of all kinds from all over the world there're going to have a job. Society today is moving in a funny direction; I can't tell you which way, but it's going in a funny direction.

**FMcD:** I think that's.

**ND:** Maybe that's just the view of an old man [unclear].

**FMcD:** I think that's a very good point to stop.

**SMcK:** Yes.

**FMcD:** It's a very interesting point.

**SMcK:** It is.

**ND:** I think you can all, eradicate all that rubbish.

**FMcD:** Just, I'm just checking everything is going, but I think we'll just press the button on that's.

**SMcK:** Niall thank you so much.

**FMcD:** Tremendous.

01.04.15

This segment is a repeat of the first one and a half minutes of the audio file.

01.05.51 (Break in the recording)

**ND:** You just have to take this all down in shorthand.

01.05.56

**CL:** I'm, I'm taking this down as quickly as I can. I don't know if it's too cold or if it's the flat battery needs charging . . . we don't have a charger cable do we that we could plug in?

**SMcK:** No . . . we've got spare batteries.

**CL:** Ah.

**ND:** You want to postpone this?

01.06.16 (Break in the recording)

**ND:** That's Tim Jeffs.

**CL:** Ah. Shall, shall I take a photograph of that while we're just observing this for a few minutes? Let's just see if it's settles down and behaves itself. I'll take a photograph of Tim Jeffs.

**ND:** Did anyone give you a course on this before you came over?

**CL:** Sort of, yes, yes.

**ND:** [Unclear] I'll take that out of your way, oh that's [unclear].

**SMcK:** Yes we did.

**CL:** [Unclear] The instructions.

**ND:** The glass reflecting.

**CL:** Yes. There we are. Well we've got a picture of Jim (Tim) Jeffs photograph. I'll make a note of where that is.

**ND:** That would be on his, probably on his way with the memorandum. Found a bundle of those, the things I'm finding here, terrible.

**CL:** What date's this?

**ND:** Keep that I've got dozens of copies of it. It is rel, relative to your past in a way.

**SMcK:** Oh yeah. Do you remember Candy Inglis?

**ND:** Mm?

**SMcK:** Candy Inglis. I used to work with Candy, wonderful girl.

**ND:** Candy, oh gosh such a terrific girl. She married . . . some Sir or other.

**SMcK:** That's right, what was his name?

**ND:** Oh she was great, great [unclear].

**SMcK:** I want to say McKinley or Macintosh or something like that? I think it was a Mac.

**ND:** I can't remember this.

**CL:** I think this is working again.

**SMcK:** She was such fun. OK.

01.07.48

**CL:** I'll, I'll keep a close eye on it if you're willing to have another go. I'll shout out.

**ND:** Do you think there's anything on it at the moment?

**CL:** It looks as if it has recorded a couple of minutes so . . . I think there is. Does that need to go off?

**SMcK:** It does. Seems to have come back on again . . . put it off. Right.

**CL:** Yeah.

**ND:** I, I said before once you rang I said "Gosh I haven't heard from you for ages" and we chatted away about all sorts of things and I said "Oh really look forward, you must come over some time, come over with David or come over on your own and we can chat away so".

**CL:** I wonder if the battery is gone in that case if it keeps [unclear].

**ND:** Where are you recording again? What's the next lot you're doing?

**SMcK:** I'm hoping the next one will be David Steel.

**CL:** Oh.

01.08.46

This segment is a repeat of the first one hour and four minutes of the audio file.

02.13.00