

Interviewee: George McCall (GMcC)	Interviewer: David Mair (DM)
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DM: David Mair

GMC: George McCall, who is a long term GMcC of Lochmaben.

DM: George, ah believe you were born in Lochmaben, is that right?

GMcC: Yes, ah was born in Lochmaben, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1929.

DM: And you were one of quite a big family were you?

GMcC: Ah was one of four of a family.

DM: Four of a family.

GMcC: Well, that was counting maself.

DM: Aye, that was three boys and a girl was it?

GMcC: Three boys and a girl.

DM: Three boys and a girl, aye, aye.

GMcC: Yes. Father was a postman, he was a local postman. He done a lot of work in Lochmaben, he done a lot of work being in the council and aw that sort o thing. He was very keen on Lochmaben and he was born in Queen Street, of course, fifty-nine. In fact, Bill Miller, he's retired clergy, Church of Scotland clergyman, he stayed next door to where he stayed in fifty-nine. That was Queen Street, Queen Street was a, quite a good street to stay in, you know. It changed quite a bit, where ah stayed, next door was a joiner's shop, belonging Quinn's. Ah spent quite a bit o time in there when ah was a kid because ah got well on. George Quinn was a joiner but his dad was Deputy Chief Constable for Dumfries and Galloway and his brother was a sergeant. He was on the Maxwelltown side, at that time. Although they were joint, they were was still the separate police forces.

### **Lochmaben schooling 02m 00s**

DM: And you went to school in Lochmaben, George, did you?

GMcC: Ah went to school in Lochmaben. It was jist a secondary, it wis a secondary school then.

DM: But you started when you were five, did you?

**02m 09s.**

GMcC: Ah started when ah was five and we went through the primary school. The primary school, which is still there yet, the old primary school. That's the house as ye turn up, it sits on the left hand side as you go up Castle Hill.

DM: Behind the golf course? Behind the golf course, aye.

GMcCL: Yea, that was the primary department and the other bit, across the road, it wis the drill hall and a lot of entertainment was put on there for Lochmaben as well.

DM: In the school drill hall, aye.

GMcC: Upstairs was the woodwork room and the science room. Ah said tae you there were a metal room, but there were no metal.

### **Castle Loch 02m 49s.**

There was the golf course, where we spent a lot of time there, an of course, the boat, the Castle Loch, which was good for fishing. We had free fishing at that time. They had boatin, the people that stayed across the road fae us, her father, he actually built boats, that was his business, making, building these boats, and it was very, very popular, the boatin.

DM: So, how many boats would be on Castle Loch at any one time do you think?

GMcC: Oh, ah would say there could hae been a dozen. Aye. The pier, they had a concrete pier right out and a rail an they had a hut for keeping aw the oars in an everythin.

DM: Sorry, the concrete pier, would that be where the car park is now?

GMcC: Where the car park is now, yes.

DM:OK.

GMcC: There were also a well there an it was good water. In fact, the well, ah think it was Tom [Russell] that got it shifted because it was making a mess o the bowling green but that water, it was very important to Lochmaben. In fact, during the summer when water wis scarce a bit at the water works, when the levels went down, that was used quite a lot for water. Even in the middle o summer it was very, very cold. But ah remember o ma uncle, John Wells, you know, you'll hae heard o McColl Wells the builders? Well he was an uncle o ma father's, actually, but ah always called him Uncle John and when he was on his deathbed, ah had tae go an get water for him...

DM: Oh right, frae that spring?

GMcC: ...because he reckoned it was the best water, he reckoned there were a cure in it, you know. But whether it was imagination or not ah don't know. Lochmaben got their water supplies fae wells. One o them wis up Ravenshill, that wis a main one, that was where people went for their water and there was also one down at the Kirk Loch brae, a water well.

### **05m 01s.**

DM: And people went for their water, did you say, they carried it every day, did they?

GMcC: Oh aye, that wis before the water works. Ah can't just tell ye, the water works were there before my day ah think. It wis, the water works wis at Bankhead, it wis Lochmaben worked by the workers, Lochmaben workers, there wis aboot three workers at that time, and it was a good water supply. In fact it's still there yet. If ever ye want tae go a walk up that way ye can go right up to it.

There's no a road up to it, well there is a road, but ah think ye've got tae walk up the field but it's aw there to be seen, like.

DM: So it was much later that the water was piped into the houses then, was it? It was much later, aye.

GMcC: It was piped intae the houses aye. The Castle Loch was quite popular. We had a sort of bit fenced off for a swimming pool. It had a sandy bottom an it had a diving board. It had two huts for tae change, changing huts, an it had a veranda. The veranda, the foundations o the veranda are still there but they've got that into a flower bed now and a summer seat. The tennis court was very popular, ah don't think tennis is so popular as it was.

DM: Well they're, not maybe as it was but they're doing well at the minute, they're doing quite well, aye.

GMcC: Aye, the water, the wee fountain that they had, they had a fountain an a cup an a chain where ye could go and have a drink. Dr Longmore, he always took pains, an he still does, to test the water an it's still drinkable. But ah was kinna saddened to see it being done away wi but, well, they always blamed that the bowling green moving when it got flooded and it was causing the bools to go off, so they took it out into the, further intae the loch and sealed it up. But it was a grand wee water drinking area, especially in the summer time, because it was always that chill, that cold.

#### **Lochmaben Victory Park 07m 25s.**

DM: And Victory Park at that time would be used quite a lot, was it?

GMcC: Victory Park was used quite a lot for people goin in. A lot o people went down there and sat on the seats and read. There was a tree planting for the different, for the Coronation and the Jubilees and that sort o thing. You'll see there's signs on the trees, ah think, to say why the trees were planted.

DM: And did many people come to Lochmaben just to sit in the park? As visitors, aye?

#### **07m 55s.**

GMcC: Yes, they did, they used to come for picnicking as well, aye. Ah always dreamt that some time we would have a wee platform in the summer an we could hae had entertainment down there, outside entertainment because we had good summers in wur young days. They're a wee bit changed now.

DM: Did they come into Lochmaben on the train or on a bus?

#### **Lochmaben Station 08m 17s.**

GMcC: The train, yes, the train, yes. The train was very popular. The station as up at the Barras of course. The station yard was very industrial, that's where the, the houses across from the Railway Inn, that was all a work area for the railway. The parcel services wis aw done by the railway and they had people come down wi barras delivering the parcels.

DM: So you remember the railway well then?

GMcC: Ah remember the railway well. There used to be the, ah cannae remember what they called the train, but it used tae come in about seven o'clock, and a lot o people used tae the Railway Inn for a drink, tae drink. And they used tae load it up with different stuffs. Rabbits wis very pop-, rabbit

food wis very popular in oor young day. Of course ah mean things were hard, times were hard, an ah remember them, they used to come down absolutely loaded with rabbits on their bike for to put on the train, for to go on to the train for tae go on to the game people to sort them out.

#### **Lochmaben Schooling 09m 26s.**

DM: A great experience, a great experience. You mentioned, George, too, at the school, to go back to the school for a minute, you said something about a garden, there was a garden across this side somewhere, was there?

GMcC: The school gardens was behind the new centre that's built in Lochmaben where these houses are now. Have ye been up that vennel?

DM: Yes, aye, up the vennel.

GMcC: Up to the centre, up from the High Street, aw that was school gardens. They had plots, an being a secondary school, they had about two tae a plot actually an they grew some lovely vegetables. An they used tae, when they were ready at certain times o the year, they used tae take them round and sell them. But they used the manure frae the sewage and it was, they stopped it because...

DM: Health and Safety.

GMcC... Health and Safety.

#### **Lochmaben soup kitchen 10m 19s.**

An ah also told ye aboot the soup kitchen, that was a new one on me, the soup kitchen. But ma older brother, he remembered it as a soup kitchen, an ah remember the hard times, the unemployment. There were no work at all really, and all the workers, all the unemployed used to stand jist at, round the Bruce, it was quite busy.

DM: How many of them would there be?

GMcC: Ah would say there could be anything up tae a couple of dozen, maybe. But ah can remember them standing there, round the Bruce. The Bruce was fenced off at one time, but it was, the fence was cut down during the war for tae get the metal to make munitions.

DM: Munitions, yes, aye.

GMcC: Also, the church had a fence round the church wall.

DM: A metal fence?

GMcC: A metal fence, yes, an it was taken down, Government law.

#### **Lochmaben Schooling 11m 24s.**

DM: If you go on though, George, you said that you finished at Lochmaben School and then you had to sit an exam or something before you went on?

GMcC: The Control Exam.

DM: The Control Exam, aye.

GMcC: Aye, it consisted o, it more or less consisted of English and a wee bit mental arithmetic. If ah remember right, ah think there would be about 120 questions on mental arithmetic and ye got a

certain time to do it; that was the exam. An that qualified ye, eether, ye could eether stay in Lochmaben School because at that time it was still a secondary school.

DM: It was still a secondary.

GMcC: Or ye could get a chance to go tae Lockerbie or the High School or the Academy. Now I don't know how it was selected, whether it was according to how ye done in your exam or no, ah don't know, on yer marks, you got marked then in yer exams.

DM: An how did you travel to Dumfries or to Lockerbie if you were going there?

GMcC: The bus.

**12m 25s.**

DM: There was a bus?

GMcC: Ye got a bus pass.

DM: A bus pass, right, aye. An you chose to go to Dumfries, is that right?

GMcC: Ah chose tae go to the High School. Ah got intae the High School, ah was kinda sorry that ah had taken the wrong course because ah think that ah realised that ah was more o a practical man, or a technical, than theory. Ma grandad he was a builder an, as ah say, ma father was a postman. But when they were building, this industry was very good at that time because we had Robinson and Davison, which was quite a big firm in these days, an it employed quite a lot of local men, a lot of them used to cycle tae Dumfries.

DM: And you got a job down The Vennel or something, didn't you? For a plasterer? [*Friars Vennel, Dumfries*]

GMcC: Ah got a job as a plasterer, aye. We were workin, ma dad said to is when ah wis off work, ah think ah wis off for about 6 weeks after I left Robinson and Davison. I was kinna sorry for it after it like, because work was scarce. An ma dad says 'You've been long enough off now' he says, 'Ye can go to Dumfries and don't come back till you get a job' an of course when ah went down The Vennel there were these plasterers workin and they jist laughed at is. Ah says 'Ah'm looking for a job an ah've got tae get a job before ah go back because ma dad says ah've got tae get a job.' 'Well ah don't know whether tae take ye on or no like? Dae ye think ye could manage it? It's hard work!' Well, ah done it fifty-odd years, fifty-five years working non-stop, bar maybe the odd times when ah had been sick or something like that.

DM: And that was at times when there wasnae a lot o work going? There wisnae much at all.

GMcC: There was no work at all. In fact, the general foreman told me that he remembered sitting on a dyke waiting on somebody dying tae get his job. That was in Dumfries.

DM: In Dumfries, aye, goodness.

GMcC: He was the general foreman, of course, wi Wells an he wis a real gentleman like, you know? But he told us how hard times it really was and it was hard times.

### **Dumfries Soup kitchen 14m 50s.**

DM: And the soup kitchen was an example of that?

GMcC: The soup kitchen, well, what happened on a Saturday night, when the butcher's closed, if they had any surplus meat or anything, they took it to the soup kitchen for to make soup. An ah cannae remember the soup kitchen in Lochmaben working but the one in Dumfries, ah remember it working. It was on Munches Street jist big urns, like, an anybody that wanted could go in an get a plate of soup.

DM: And were these local women that made the food?

GMcC: I think just local volunteers.

DM: Just local volunteers?

GMcC: Aye.

DM: And how many people would turn up for something to eat at that time?

GMcC: Well, food was plentiful if you could buy it, but if there were no, when there were no work, ah mean, ma cousin, Davy McCall, he was a stone mason. As soon as a touch of frost came, roon about September or October, ye were put off work and they didnae get started again tae March. There were no money bar ah think there were an allowance, now ah don't know how this allowance worked. We talk about it nowadays about the social but these men went down tae Annie Clark's, Annie Clark was the registrar, that was the house next to Balcastle and they used to get money there. They cawd it parish money but ah'm no, ah'm no sure how it, how the system worked, or how they got paid. Ma dad was, he was a postman, he hadnae a big pay but it was great tae have a good-

DM: Regular job, eh.

GMcC: ...these were good jobs, these were good jobs in these days. Ah enjoyed the schooling in Lochmaben because they were good teachers, really good teachers. In fact they really drummed it intae ye. An ah didnae do so well when ah went tae the High School, but that was a good school too. The High School, at that time, was on George Street.

DM: Oh, it was in George Street?

GMcC: George Street.

DM: That became the college that, or something didn't it?

GMcC: It became part of the college, aye, but it's still, the new part was Loreburn Primary School. Now, the funny thing is, when ah went tae the High School when ah wis eleven, twelve, after Control, ah started there, at the High School, an ah finished at the High School. That's where my workshop was. They made the workshop in 1986 for tae start off a plastering course.

### **17m 38s.**

DM: So at that time you were teaching people then, you were teaching them how to be plasterers?

GMcC: Ah was teaching plastering, aye, ah was teaching plastering. Ah had a classroom as well, ah done the theory as well as the practical, more practical than anything else, of course. An the old

science room at George Street, ah had it as a sort o classroom. It wis a workshop for doing cornice work and that sort of thing.

### **World War Two 18m 13s.**

DM: And George, you would you be in Lochmaben when war broke out, were ye?

GMcC: Ah was in Lochmaben when War broke out, yes, 1939, 3rd September 1939.

DM: And how was it announced in the parish?

GMcC: It was announced by the Town Crier, which was a Mr Trotter at that time. An he went round wi a bell and announced that war had broke out. Well, ah wis young at the time, but ah went and seen some of the locals away on the train, that was conscripted, conscription just started in 1939, just more or less when the war was declared.

DM: And how many men would go away from Lochmaben? Quite a few?

GMcC: Ah, when ah went there were a few, but even at that time ah would say there were about five: Bobby Bell, oh there were, a cannae remember, Tommy Mitchell, Peter Mitchell, Wilson's son got killed, some o them wis in the army before the war, of course.

DM: Before the war, yes, right. And did they leave Lochmaben on the train did they?

GMcC: They went on the train.

IDM: To Lockerbie or something?

GMcC: Lochmaben.

DM: Aye but to Lockerbie an then away,

DM: Aye. That was the start of the war.

DM: But it was tough times again, was it, during the war years? It would still be tough, aye.

### **19m 32s.**

GMcC: Yes it was tough during the war because there was rationing, and stuff was very, very scarce, because the shipping was all upset and everything, in the war years.

DM: I was thinking, that you mentioned Halleaths, though? Was Halleaths used in the-.

GMcC: Halleaths Camp, well ah can start off. That was the first that we saw o the war, how it was affecting us. Ah cannae jist remember how long it wis after war was declared, but we found that there were about 250 men frae The Royal Engineers came to Lochmaben to build the camp, and they were billeted in Lochmaben, in the houses, people took them in. They were, of course, fed in the church hall an the cookin was all done in the wee houses along tae the right of the church hall, where Hal McGhie has [?]. One of the cooks, the Aldersons, I don't know if you know the Aldersons, or no, decorators, Terence?

DM: Aye.

GMcC: His dad was one o the cooks an he married in Lochmaben.

DM: Oh right, I see.

GMcC: After the camp was built for some reason or another they sent men fae every regiment in the British army, ah'm sure, there were. There were Welsh men with their fancy an aw the sort o replica gear on, the regiments, an they aw came tae the camp. An course the next thing we heard that the camp wis, that they were gonna turn intae one regiment, which become The First Reconnaissance Corps.

DM: So it was a post for British soldiers then, was it?

GMcC: It was a post for British soldiers, yes, aye. It wis a big camp, it wis a big camp. The square's still there yet, the parade square. We used to go down there, they used tae allow us to go down for entertainment, do's, parties, concerts, things like that. Dancing and it was quite good. Once of the local worthies, Smith, they called him. His nickname was the Aga Khan, he was a Sergeant an he wis a Drill Instructor. He wis very sore on the men, really. In fact a lot of them used tae say they wanted to kill him [*laughter*], that was the Aga Khan, but he was a Lochmaben man, actually, an for some reason he was posted. He had a family in Lochmaben, they had rough times. Now, another thing which ah noticed in ma young days wis people running aboot in their bare feet. Footwear wis something.

DM: People couldn't afford that of course could they?

GMcC: Well the farm workers and that sort of thing.

**22m 32s.**

DM: Were there any other, apart from the camp, was there any other signs about the place of the war? You didn't see anything else?

GMcC: Yes, Millhouse Bridge, that big mansion house that belonged Jardines', ah cannae remember the name o it.

DM: Jardine Hall.

GMcC: Jardine Hall, aye, it was a hospital.

DM: It was a hospital?

GMcC: Yes. Now another thing that ah wanted tae say wis that the SS, next door tae where ah stayed. There was a British Legion hut and the SS took it over. Now the SS, of course it's the SAS now but at that time, they trained here and up the Mill Road was the gas house. There was this big chimney and they used tae do a lot o work training and that, house to house fighting and that sort of thing, in the area, and that detachment that was trained in Lochmaben, they were first, on D-Day, to land on the beaches.

DM: Oh, is that right.

GMcC: An the Major that was in charge o them got killed just at the beginnin o the war. The field was a big camp area. It was mair or less, ye could say, it was the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Hygiene Section, it was the RAMC and they supplied the laundries, the laundry for the hospital and aw the camps round about. There was Millbank where the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Black Watch, they were stationed there an they used to come with their band, they yaist tae come an play at Lockerbie, Lochmaben and round about. The aerodrome was operating, it was a big affair as well, the RAF over at Heathhall, Dumfries.

DM: At Heathhall, aye.

GMcC: It wis a big affair, an they had a military band as well, and they yaist tae come an play. Ah think that's what made my love for military bands, like.

DM: OK, right, good. And you said you remember the glove factory in Lochmaben?

GMcC: The glove factory that was on Princes Street they made gloves during the war for the forces.

DM: Oh right.

GMcC: An in the forces' colours for the RAF, the Navy an the Air Force. An they also made socks. It was McGeorge's, but they had a big factory in Dumfries, they called it the Nithdale Factory, it wis up by the infirmary. It's the flats now an it closed down during the war ah think. Ah was asking ma wife, that's the only job she ever had, she worked in the factory, an ah was asking her how many were employed. She said she couldnae remember but it did employ a few. Wilma's, ah think it would be Wilma's grandmother was in charge, she was the manageress o the factory, it employed a few.

DM: It ran for a number of years, did it, the factory?

GMcC: All during the war, all during the war. They had one in Sanquhar as well, but they closed them down. The McGeorges was, ah think retired and it was taken over and they just kept the one main factory.

### **Lochmaben Shops 25m 45s.**

DM: And at that time that was one of many shops though, in Lochmaben, wasn't t? There were a lot o shops in the place.

MC.McCALL: There were thirty-eight ah've counted.

DM: Thirty-eight, goodness.

GMcC: In the High Street alone. There was Teen Dalziel, she wis a sort o sweetie confectioner's shop. That's where the kids, aw the school kids went and got their sweeties for school. Mrs Hart or Miss Hart, she had a sort of chocolate, sort of grocery shop, very old woman. Across the road was the bakery, Thomson's the bakers. There was Miss Duff's fruit and veg, the Post office was still there, A.Y. Johnson's was the draper's. Oh the chemist, Roland Bisset's, McMichael's the Grocers. Next door was Johnny Bell's the chemist and along was Maxwell and Hair's, drapers, and then across the road was the butcher's. So it shows you how many-

DM: Absolutely.

GMcC: Aye and in Queen Street there were shoemakers, Graham's, the shoe maker and confectionery, Somerville's the bakers, Murray's sweetie shop, again, Tweedie's Grocers, Davidson's Grocers, Tweedie's, shoe makers, shoe repairers.

DM: Of course at that time nobody went away anywhere to shop, did they?

GMcC: It was all local.

DM: It was all local, aye.

GMcC: Aye, on Bruce Street, Roxburgh was the bakers and egg merchants. Further up there was Halliday's grocers and tea merchants.

DM: You've some memory, George, it's amazing.

GMcC: King's was the cycle shop wi fishing tackle and toys for kids.

DM: And these shops just gradually closed did they, just gradually?

### **27m 31s.**

GMcC: They closed aye, the big stores took over, the big stores. There were two cycle shops in Lochmaben. McGhie had a cycle shop as well. Two blacksmith shops, McGhie had a blacksmith's shop. Ah don't know whether, he kept it open as a museum, but ah don't know whether it still exists or no yet. It was at the Townhead.

### **Lochmaben Housing 27m 50s.**

Queen Street was completely different, there wis a lot of houses that's been knocked down, where ah stayed there, there could have been four or five families just opposite, but there's only two houses there now where there could be four or five. Times were really hard because when ah was a kid ah remember going round Queen Street, and yin o the chaps that, he actually laboured to me, he had been workin and been forced to gaun away an work about Whithorn an he came back and he brought a wife back wi him an aw that they had was a camp bed and a chair, no linoleum, nothing. A then he stayed across the road.

DM: And did he move into a tied house? Would it be a tied house?

GMcC: No he moved intae Croft Terrace. Croft Terrace, aye. They were startin tae get better in these day, times wis getting better an they started, Halliday Terrace was the first, that took over all the over-populated area o Marjoriebanks. Marjoriebanks, the name wis changed through Burns, ah believe, he termed in one of his poems, Marjorie o the Many Lochs an ah think that's why it's called Marjoriebanks.

DM: But you also know why it's called the Bogle Hall, don't you?

GMcC: Well, aye, the Bogle Hall, God it was rough, it really wis rough. In fact, my vision o Bogle Hall wis empty the fires, the ashes oot the fire, they jist threw them out the window and they were ash paths. An ah remember o goin intae one house and aw ye could see wis bunk beds and it mair or less filled a room; there were that many people stayed. The corridor, or the lobby as we call them, they went right out on to the pavement, same level and everything else, ah don't know how they didn't flood. But it was rough quarters, in fact, it wis that bad that they said you couldn't walk through it at night.

DM: And was it single people that was staying there or married?

GMcC: Families, families, well ah don't know whether, but when they built Halliday Terrace a lot of these people shifted.

DM: and it was the Council that built Halliday Terrace?

GMcC: The council built it Halliday Terrace. Another thing wis they wouldnae have tiled roofs, the old Council, everything had tae be slated. There wis, still there yet, what we call a [*Paddin Can?*]. It wis for tramps and they could stay there the night, ah don't think there was anybody had any control of it, it was just an open door where they could walk in and sleep.

### **30m 38s.**

DM: Is this a house? Was it a house or a shed?

MR.MCALL: Aye it is still there yet, yes, aye.

DM: Where is it about?

GMcC: It's right at the end, in fact ah think it's got a sign on it.

DM: Oh, going down Marjoriebanks and over the hill, on the left, aye?

GMcC: Aye, but the old house, you're up on in Rankin Heights, are ye?

DM: No, I'm Marjoriebanks.

GMcC: You're Marjoriebanks.

DM:Aye.

GMcC:Well the one on Marjoriebanks, that was where one of the grocer's shops wis, the Grierson's, it's still there yet, no as a grocer's shop. But the chap, he teaches at college, he teaches photography, unless he's gone. I don't know if he is still there or not, but he stays in Marjoriebanks.

DM: No I don't know him. So one of the houses was a shop? Grierson's, aye?

GMcC: One o the shops, aye, and its still there yet, but he turned it into bedrooms ah think.

### **Entertainment 31m 35s.**

DM: Of course there would have been some entertainment going on. What can you remember of that?

GMcC: Well the entertainment was, there were jist ordinary sport, there wis football. The dancing of course, there were always dances going on every week that was all really. We just sort of found our own entertainment, really. I as a boy, ah spent a lot of time in the wood, down at the Bogs down there, we used to build bridges and stuff like that and we had great fun, like.

DM: And when did the cinema start coming to Lochmaben?

GMcC: The cinema started just after the war finished, a chap called Cummings, Mr Cummings, he was a real gentleman, but he hadnae the money to do it like, he tore the church to pieces to make it into a cinema an ah don't think he could afford it.

### **32m 11s.**

DM: That was the one at the Barras?

GMcC: Aye the one at the Barras.

DM: It got off tae a bad start?

GMcC: Well, the first film was "Lassie Come Home" and it kept breaking down and it put people off, but at the finish-up ah think he just completely gave up, ah think.

DM:When it was operating though, were there a large number of people went there to the cinema? They liked going?

GMcC: Oh yes, it was well supported for a wee while anyway, aye. It was quite good but ah don't think he would make a lot of money out o it.

DM: And you were saying that the circus used to come occasionally?

GMcC: The circus used to come once a year, Pander's Circus. They used tae have an animal parade.

DM: Through the High Street?

GMcC: Jist down at the High Street, Queen Street. An they used tae, the elephants used tae, there was a tap there win a basin an we used to go in there and see d the elephants used tae, the elephants used drink the water and squirt it out. It was great, aye, it was great, really, and it was well supported as well, because ah think the animals finished the circuses, when they stopped using the animals.

DM: Yes, aye. An you also remember a ghost show that used to come?

GMcC: Aye, Biddle's ghost, Biddle's ghost and Henry's pictures of course, I forgot about that,

DM: Aye Henry's.

GMcC: Henry's pictures, aye, that was the first cinema, that was a cinema as well, but it was done in a tent as well an it wis done Jeannie's field what they called Jeannie's field, opposite where the park is, the Mill Park, these are houses, it was just one big billboard at that time for, you know how they used to advertize soaps and everything, it was a billboard.

DM: Aye, keep everybody informed about things?

GMcC: Everybody, aye.

### **Lowland Games 34m 15s.**

DM: And then there was the Lowland Games too?

GMcC: The Lowland Games, they were brilliant, they were top games in the South of Scotland, they were the main games in the South of Scotland. Kirkconnel, they had them as well, they were quite good, but Lochmaben was the place and we had really top sportsmen coming and competing. It was a great affair and in fact, it was a big day out for Lochmaben, something like the Gala but it was aw sport. They had greyhound racing, M'Ghies, they had greyhounds and they had the greyhound racin. They use to have the rabbit and the greyhounds and they used to run on the tracks. And the runs, they had them stringed off for the 100 yard runs and that sort of thing. And cycle racing, country dancing, Highland dancing; they had a platform and they had the Highland dancing and they used to bring top pipe bands as well. Aye.

DM: So who organised all that?

GMcC: Well, they had a local committee.

DM: Committee, aye.

GMcC: It was actually for the Lowland Games, a Lowland Games committee. Ma dad would be on it as well. He was in everything, like. Like Wilma's dad, Wilma's dad was a great worker for...

DM: For the community.

GMcC: ...Lochmaben. Oh yes, aye, he done an awful lot.

DM: Aye, so you've had a busy time, George, a busy life in Lochmaben.

GMcC: I've enjoyed doing for Lochmaben, you know.

DM: Because you were in the Community Council as well, weren't you?

GMcC: I was in the Community Council, ah was voted on at that time. They done an election an ah was voted on. It wis a lot of good work. But it started and sort of fell... Dr Wilson was the chairman and Bennet Miller, Professor Bennet Miller, he was the chairman for a while. You wouldn't know Bennet Miller, he stayed up the Mill Road.

DM:Oh right.

GMcC:He was quite a character as well, like. Ah think he was university trained professor, like. He was a professor o Marine Law, that was his actual job. He kinna looked after the right of ways in Lochmaben, he was very good at that. And then there were Dr Wilson after that, an ah took over. Ah took over for a year because nobody wanted the job an ah done it for three years, but three years was plenty, ah was quite happy, although ma dad, Mark, ma brother, he was aboot thirty-odd years as a councillor, like.

**36m 48s.**

DM:Was he?

GMcC: Aye, an ma dad, he was a Baillie, of course, and my grandfather was the Dean o Guild.

DM: Aye, a long association with the burgh.

GMcC: A long association wi the burgh, aye.

DM:Aye, absolutely. And changes, you've seen a lot of changes?

GMcC: Ah've seen a lot o changes, where the flats wis, ah mean ah worked on them as well, down Queen Street, St Margaret's, flats.

DM:Yes.

GMcC:It was the church.

INNTERVIEWER: And you remember it as a church, do you?

GMcC: Ah remember it was a church, actually we were members o the parish church. Ma dad was the Beadle an a think he fell out wi the minister an we went tae the Free Church, an they turned it intae flats at the finish-up, like. They joined the two together. We had a good minister here at one time, they cawd him McColl, he came frae aboot Hamilton. Actually he filled the church and a lot o people actually that had children, they cawd their children after him, and that's , the McColl Wells, they were a big contractor at one time, they used to employ aboot 112 people, McColl Wells, well, the McColls the chap that who had the business, he was called for McColl the minister. Mr Gibb, Dad was the beadle, but Mr Gibb, he was Lochmaben born, well, he came tae Lochmaben from his early days and brought his family up in Lochmaben. One o them was the Director of Health for Aberdeen, one of his sons, and one o them was a judge in Kirkcudbright, Forbes Gibb. Ah don't know what the other one done but he was a good minister as well, a good preacher, and we had some good preachers at The Free Church as well.

DM: Well, have to thank you very much, George, for your time.

GMcC: Dae ye think ah've done any good?

DM: [Laughter] Oh ye've done grand. An interesting working life then George, have you?

GMcC: Yes, oh yes, an ah've enjoyed it.

**END OF INTERVIEW.**