

Interviewee(s): Douglas Grieve (DG)	Interviewer(s): Ailsa Fortune (AF)
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COUNTY	Haddingtonshire
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TITLE	<i>Ailsa interviews Douglas Grieve about his life.</i>
REGION	<i>Lothian</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Rural life, wildlife, gamekeeping.</i>
COUNTY	<i>East Lothian, Midlothian</i>
TOWN	<i>Longniddry</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>13 June 2018</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Ailsa Fortune</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>2018</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Ailsa talks to Dougie Grieve about his life as a gamekeeper, in Peeblesshire and East Lothian. Dougie gives an overview of his childhood, skipping school and becoming interested in wildlife and gamekeeping, and talking about his family, where they lived in Longniddry, and what he grew up eating as a child. He also talks about the relationship he had with the late Gosford gamekeeper at the time, Peter Rennock, who taught him several life lessons. Dougie also talks about his apprenticeship in engineering and his first few jobs. He then goes on to talk about his extensive experience with gamekeeping and his various bosses and living situations.</i>

Douglas/Dougie Grieve – DG; Ailsa Fortune – A.

Keywords: Background; Family; Work on Wemyss Estate; Changes in Gamekeeping Practices; Rearing Pheasants;

0h 00m 00s

A: Good morning Dougie. It's nice to see you this morning, thank you very much for coming along to chat about your life and some of the things that you've done in it.

DG: Mornin Ailsa. I certainly will do my best to give you as much information as I can remember about my past which is quite colourful.

A: Good, good, good. Well, we'll start off Dougie, with just... Tell us about- well tell us who you are first of all – your name and where you were born and a little bit about your background.

DG: My name's Douglas Henderson Grieve, which I don't like the middle name part, but it was my grandfather's name, my mother's maiden name, so quite proud to hold it because I was very close to that side of my family.

A: Yes, and that was a very Scottish tradition, actually, to bring the woman's name in.

DG: Yes.

A: You know. So, I think you should be proud of it.

DG: Well, em... I live in Longniddry now, an I started off in Longniddry, an I was born in Aberlady. I was born in the Vert Hospital, an my parents at that time lived in Aberlady. I started the school there when I was five, and in less than a year my parents moved to Longniddry, and I obviously then went to Longniddry Primary School, where I spent my years until primary seven. Not too happily, I would say, because I wasn't a kind a- I wasn't an academic, and never was going to be. Very country unified, but anyway. From the age of that – eight or nine – when I was at the school, I used to start when I came to the wildlife centre wi the gamekeeping, suchlike.

A: Ok.

Background – 0h 02m 00s

DG: I then moved to Preston Lodge High School, which I was there for three years. Spent a lot of the time hiding in the woods instead of bein at the school. And that's where also I learned a lot of my wildlife knowledge.

A: Ok. I don't know whether the teachers thought very highly of you for not being in the class!

DG: No. Once I was caught, my parents didn't think too much of it either.

A: Just a word about your parents – what did your parents do or would it be just your father that worked in those days?

DG: Well, in the early days ma father he was a- he actually served his time as a watchmaker.

A: Oh, right, ok.

DG: And then- he then went to work with Ferranti Limited-

A: In Edinburgh?

DG: In Dalkeith, at Thornybank at Dalkeith.

A: Mmhm.

DG: And he was a instrument fitter and ended up being a foreman, and he was there for, oh, a long, long number of years.

A: Ok.

DG: Ma mother, she did various jobs once the kids were up, once my sisters and my brother and myself were up.

A: Mmhm.

DG: And she worked in Duncan's the chocolate factory-

A: Oh yeah.

DG: And, eh I think it was in the Easthouses or Mayfield or Dalkeith somewhere.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And, eh, then she got a job as a, what you would call a tick woman [?] in these days. A traveller for a firm called, I think it was Lawson's.

A: Ok.

DG: I think they were based in Musselburgh. And she spent many, many years goin round all the villages in East Lothian an that collecting the tick and delivering some o the clothes that people bought on... Whatever the word is... On the tick, I can't...

A: On tick? Right, ok. Do you want to just- you've said she was a tick woman, do you want to just explain that? Just a little bit because it's a term that's gone out of date.

0h 04m 08s

DG: Well, it was... It was the fact that people obviously mainly people in low paid jobs could not afford to just go out an buy their children, and their selves, various items o clothing, and household goods.

A: Yeah.

DG: And these companies started then to let ye have them and ye had to pay them up on a weekly basis.

A: Yes, yes.

DG: And ma mother used to- there was no such thing as bank cards in these days, so ma mother would go on a weekly run, various villages on each particular day, and collect the money an take back sometimes any goods that they didn't find suitable, and sometimes deliver some goods that they had ordered.

A: Was that- was that difficult sometimes? If people didn't have the money?

DG: Very difficult. An I mean as I found out in later years, ma mother sometimes helped the more needy out o her own purse.

A: Did she really?

DG: Yes.

A: Good gracious.

DG: But she never ever told my father that. Or any of us until very much later years.

A: Right, ok.

DG: And she was very, very helpful wi them, wi everything.

A: Yes.

DG: I think she- she sometimes got intae trouble for spending too much time talkin tae people and helping them, rather than doing her job. *[laughter]*.

A: So, just going back there, you said your father was a watchmaker and can we just put some dates on this or when your parents got married, when you were born? That's quite important.

DG: Well, I was born in 1951.

A: Ok.

DG: My parents were married in 1950.

A: Right, ok.

DG: Em, I think I was the reason they got married.

A: Yeah, ok that sounds a good reason! *[laughter]*

DG: Well, I don't think I actually *know* that is the reason they got married.

A: Em, and then you've got some- you have sisters?

Family – 0h 06m 02s

DG: I have two sisters, an a brother. My- I'm the oldest in the family. My sister Audrey, who passed away about a year an... Just over a year ago-

A: Yeah.

DG: Was six- she would have been- she was sixty-four when she passed away.

A: Right, ok.

DG: My brother is the next one, he is fifty-nine at the moment. He's a bricklayer.

A: Uhuh.

DG: And has been since school even. And my sister Shona... eh, is, I think, I think about fifty-two.

A: Ok, ok. And do they still all live locally?

DG: My brother lives in a place near Airdrie, in the west, called Greengairs. My sister Shona is just moved to Musselburgh. She lived in either Longniddry, North Berwick, or Macmerry in the past.

A: Yeah.

DG: And Audrey, the sister that passed away, she lived like six doors down from my mother on Wemyss Road in Longniddry and stayed in Longniddry all her life.

A: Right, ok. So, you're a real East Lothian family?

DG: Yes, we're an East Lothian family.

A: Yeah.

DG: And as a matter of interest, on the address, ye know the cottage that I stay in at the moment?

A: Yeah.

DG: As I have already intimated to ye that I did as I was first married stay in the cottage next door. An there's just two cottages, they're at the back of the railway station at Longniddry-

A: Yeah.

DG: But my whole family has, at one time or another, stayed in these two cottages.

A: That's astonishing.

DG: When I moved out my sister Audrey moved in.

A: Yeah.

DG: My brother Colin moved intae the one next door.

A: Yeah.

DG: Then when my sister Audrey moved out my mum and dad moved intae the one she was in. And when my brother moved out my sister Shona moved intae the one she was in.

0h 08m 06s

A: Good gracious.

DG: So, all the family has stayed in these two, thanks to the courtesy o Wemyss and March letting us rent these properties.

A: Ah, right, they're on the Wemyss Estate?

DG: They're on Wemyss Estate, they are Wemyss Estate properties, yes.

A: And- ok. And you of course work for-

DG: Aye, I work for the-

A: -for the current.

DG: I of course work for the current Lord of Wemyss, yes.

A: And you worked for his father? As well?

DG: Aye, I worked for his father, yes.

A: So, yes, so Dougie you work on the Wemyss Estate, and you worked for the present Lord Wemyss' father as well?

DG: Yes, I worked for the late Lord Wemyss, both here at Gosford, before he died for a few years, and as kind a- generally chauffeured him around, looked after him a bit.

A: Ok.

DG: And did the same jobs as I'm doing now.

A: Right.

DG: Caretaker, suchlike.

A: So, what's your official role here? Or I'm sure it's not really official. *[laughter]*. Have you got a name for it or-?

DG: Yes, well-

A: You have?

DG: Well, I started off- I came here looking for a cottage an then got offered a job.

A: Right.

DG: And my cottage had been made redundant because my boss was killed in a plane crash in my last estate.

A: Oh, gosh.

DG: Which we'll come to maybe later in the interview.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And eh, they offered me a job at the big house – caretaker, handyman.

A: Ok.

DG: Which I wasn't sure I was able to do, but the factor advised me I'd be able to do it standing on my head with the experience I had. And I had worked with these gentry before, so I took on the job and enjoyed it very much. Very, very much a gentleman, the old Lord Wemyss.

A: Yes.

DG: At the old school, they rarely gave me the respect-

A: Yeah.

DG: -that you maybe don't deserve but ye expect.

Work on Wemyss Estate – 0h 10m 04s

A: Yes, I think you probably do deserve it and it's- yeah.

DG: You know, eh...

A: Yeah, I know what you mean.

DG: Anyway, he was very- he was very good to work for. Em, and...

A: And he was good to work for but he died in- when did he die?

DG: Well, it's about ten years ago.

A: Ten years ago.

DG: Yeah, I cannae remember exactly the date but, yeah.

A: And his son's taken over the estate?

DG: His son's taken over the estate, and very good to work for the family have been. As I say, I worked for them before at the Barns Estate in Peebleshire.

A: Ok.

DG: And again, I was gamekeeper there.

A: Yeah.

DG: Fulltime. And then I, when I moved on and then I- I'll come back to the Ormiston bit in between.

A: Yeah.

DG: When I came back here and I was discussing there that I was caretaker handyman, well, the part-time gamekeeper got a bit of an injury, an then his father died, so I stupidly took on a part-time gamekeeping role to help out-

A: Ok.

DG: And after a successful shooting season, was then railroaded, really, although quite happily railroaded to be the part-time gamekeeper as well as the handyman caretaker, and to combine both roles.

A: Ok, ok.

DG: Which I must admit was- I was very devastated when ah lost ma gamekeeping job and couldn't get one because of my age, which was a bit ridiculous cause I wasnae that old.

A: How old were you when you lost the job?

DG: I was fifty-three.

A: Oh, right. Ok.

DG: When I- my boss was killed in a plane crash an I had to give up the gamekeeping, an all the jobs that I went for at the time said you've got the experience but we'd prefer someone younger, well ye cannae have both.

0h 12m 06s

A: No, no.

DG: So, I got a bit disillusioned at the time.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And I obviously came to work here.

A: Yeah.

DG: And then I've been reasonably happy doin the gamekeeping again.

A: Yeah.

DG: Other then the changes which I'm sure we'll discuss.

A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DG: Which made it- makes it not quite as enjoyable as it was.

A: Yes. Can we just go back then to the – em, I'm just gonna move that closer to you – can we go back to the- that gamekeeping? When did the gamekeeping start? Because you said that when you were at secondary school you played truant? [*laughter*]. You were off in the woods. You weren't kissing girls but you were looking at birds?

DG: Lookin at birds, yes, aye. Girls came later. [*laughter*]. Em, yes when I was actually nine years old my father, who was very friendly wi the gamekeeper, and my grandfather was friendly wi the gamekeeper here at Gosford, a chap called Peter Rennock. Quite a famous old gamekeeper in the Gosford realms.

A: Mmhm.

DG: Eh, I came beatin here, which gave me the insight intae the shooting, which I got quite, really interested in.

A: And beating is when you go ahead-

DG: Beating is when you chase the pheasants-

A: Out.

DG: Out to the standing.

A: Yeah.

DG: In these days the gentry.

A: Yeah, the gentry.

DG: The gentry-

A: It was all the gentry?

DG: It was all the gentry in these days. It was Lord Wemyss, and his guests.

A: Right.

DG: Or family.

A: Right. And so what year are we there? We're in about the-

DG: We're goin back about 1960.

A: Yes, yeah. Yeah.

DG: And from there on, as I got older, I would spend time down in the estate, visiting Peter an helping him with the pheasants, the rearing of the pheasants an general vermin killing, ye know?

A: Yeah.

0h 14m 03s

DG: An obviously getting the shooting out of it, which-

A: Yeah.

DG: Which excited a young guy, obviously, and eh, I never lost that bit really, since then.

A: Right. So, did this Peter Rennock teach you how to use a gun?

DG: Eh, my father-

A: Your father.

DG: Mainly, and my grandfather used tae take me out shooting pigeons – with the gamekeeper's permission, of course. And, eh, that's where it all started from really. And I don't think it works quite the same now but in these days we were started off with a small-bore gun, which would be called a 410.

A: Mmhm.

DC: An once you had mastered the art o that, the safety aspect, which was very, very important.

A: Yeah.

DG: We would then step onto the bigger guns. The twelve-bores, the double barrels, suchlike.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And I have a very interesting story of when I was mebbe in my teens, about seventeen, eighteen.

A: Yeah.

DG: We were at a hare shoot, an East Lothian had loads of hares in these days an we would regularly go to different estates an farms on different Saturdays in February and March an some evenings once the light got light enough to shoot these hares.

A: Yeah.

DG: But it was a rather scary- because there were loads of men, twenty or thirty men with guns, some walkin the hares towards the ones that were standing-

A: Yeah.

DG: So... To intimate how dangerous a shotgun was, and that was a dangerous shot to place. Peter Rennock's father, John, who lived with him, but he wasn't doin the gamekeeping anymore, but he was still the boss, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: As yer father was.

A: Yeah. In those days.

DG: And he stopped the shoot, and said 'now, I will give everyone a lesson here'. And he went an got a turnip out the field we were standing at an he took it, an he laid it on a fencepost. An he stepped back so far, an he blew this turnip up.

A: [*Gasp*]

DG: An he made the point to everyone standing: that turnip is harder than your head.

A: Yeah.

DG: An you see the mess that turnip made. An that has stuck wi me all my life.

A: Yes.

DG: An for the safety aspect, that has been something that – with guns – to ma own son, who I learned to shoot, and many other people who I learned to shoot, an encouraged to come shoot-

A: Yeah.

DG: The safety aspect was put in.

A: Important, yeah.

DG: So, that was a very important part of it.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: The early days, ye know?

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: So, from there I helped Peter, as I say, for years and years.

A: Yeah?

DG: And wanted to be a gamekeeper.

A: Mmhm, mmhm.

DG: Desperately wanted to be a gamekeeper but my grandfather, who was a general manager, he was a joiner with Wimpey and Company.

A: Oh yeah.

DG: Being a sensible man, an my own father, who, as we've said, worked in Ferranti Limited and was a foreman, 'We want you to get a trade first. We think you should get a trade'.

A: Yeah.

DG: So, totally unconvinced I did go to Ferranti's. With that help from my father and passed the entry exams, and was taken on as a mechanical engineer.

A: Ah, right.

DG: To which I then spent five boring years of my life doing mechanical engineering until I had completed my apprenticeship.

A: Yeah.

DG: I did get City and Guilds certificates in that so-

A: Right, yeah.

DG: I must have paid some sort of attention.

A: Yeah. I'm sure you did.

DG: Yes. An then from there I left Ferranti's once my time was completed which ye tended to do in these days, because if the hourly rate was better at a different factory you would- if your factory wasnae putting yer hourly rate up you would go for a vacancy at a factory that had a slightly higher hourly rate.

Oh 18m 19s

A: Oh right, oh can you remember what the hourly rate was?

DG: I couldn't, I would really be saying- I just wouldn't have a memory of that. I know when I started as an apprentice my wage was three guineas, three pounds, three shillings, that was all I got. When I started at fifteen.

A: A week?

DG: A week.

A: A week. Three guineas – and it was guineas?

DG: It was- well, we always said ye get three guineas, because I think that's what three pounds, three shillings was called in these days.

A: That's right, yeah.

DG: I mean ma mother took most of it. She insisted that I paid my way.

A: Uhuh.

DG: But then I had bus fares to go to the training school an I had lunches an ye know, fifty pence or it was a ten shillings in these days.

A: Ten shillings, yeah.

DG: Ten bob note was a fortune.

A: Yeah, lot of money, yeah.

DG: So, aye, that's where it went from there. As I moved then to McKettrick-Agnew at Macmerry, who are no longer in existence, engineering-

A: What are they called, say it-

DG: McKettrick-Agnew.

A: Oh, right, ok.

DG: They're where the old council buildings- uh, where the new council building is, there at the industrial estate.

A: Yeah?

DG: That was where the factory was. And then because of the rate move, I went to Aviamac at Prestonpans.

A: Right.

DG: Which is- was where Lidl is now.

A; Right, ok.

DG: So, again another old building that's changed.

A: Yeah.

DG: And stayed there for a while and got a bit, a bit unsettled again. And I applied to Edinburgh University.

A: Right.

DG: And went there as a mechanical lab technician.

A: Right, ok. Was that out at the King's Buildings?

DG: At King's Buildings, yes.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And, eh, I wasn't there too long. I was there probably less than a year, and I got the great opportunity that I'd awaited all my life – to go and be a gamekeeper.

A: Right.

DG: Which was got- the job was got for me by Peter Rennock.

A: Ah, right. Ok.

DG: Who used his contacts-

A: Yeah.

DG: -to say I know a guy who's looking for a job that I think will be able to do it, because they wouldnae recommend ye if ye werenae up to scratch, ye know?

A: No. No, no.

DG: And it went from there.

A: Yeah, so what date was that? When was that?

DG: I would be, at that time, twenty-one, twenty-two, just.

A: Ok.

DG: I moved pretty fast after my apprenticeship was over.

A: You'd done a lot. So, how old were you when you officially left school?

DG: When I officially left school I was fifteen.

A: Fifteen, yes.

DG: Yes.

A: Because that was the school leaving age then wasn't it?

DG: That was the school leaving age, yes.

A: Yeah, yeah that's right. Yeah, so-

DG: Yeah it just went on from there, he put me in touch with this chap at Oxenfoord Castle up- man who was Marshall Wright, who were a transport company but he ran the shoot for a syndicate of local farmers.

A: Right. At Oxenfoord- on the Oxenfoord Estate?

DG: On the Oxenfoord Castle Estate-

A: Estate.

DG: Which is owned by Earl of Stair.

A: The Earl of Stair that's the... Hamilton-Dalrymple?

DG: Yeah, that's right, yes.

A: Oh, well Dalrymple-Hamilton.

DG: Yes, one of the Dalrymples. The Earl of Stair, yes.

A: Yes, that's right, yeah, yeah.

DG: And I was employed by the syndicate, not by Stair Estates. They rented the shooting and employed the fulltime gamekeeper.

A: Yeah. Ok. And so, how long were you there?

DG: I was there for just over three years. An interesting point o that is that my first child, Suzanne, was born when I lived in the cottage at Longniddry.

0h 22m 05s

A: Yeah?

DG: My second child, Heather, was born when we moved to Oxenfoord Castle Estate.

A: Mmhm?

DG: And my third child, Douglas, was born when we moved to Glenormiston Estate. So, I didn't have a child when I was at Barns Estate.

A: Right, ok.

DG: I must have been too interested in my work at that time. *[laughter]*. So, just interesting-

A: Yeah.

DG: -that the three kids were born at different places.

A: Different places. So, when you were at Oxenfoord you got a cottage with your- or a house or a-?

DG: Yes. All the jobs you get a tied- That was the normal procedure. At each place you got a tied house.

A: Right, yeah.

DG: And the first jobs I think were better because you got kinda better perks – yer perks being I think at Oxenfoord I got two tonne of coal, my electricity bill paid-

A: Uhuh, uhuh.

DG: Ye also got yer house rates paid. Yer rent's paid. And nowadays council tax.

A: Council tax?

DG: It still happens, ye get yer council tax paid.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Em, ye got a vehicle, an the petrol was paid for it.

A: Really?

DG: And for all the- so, I mean, while gamekeepers were poorly paid-

A: Yeah.

DG: We did have a few interesting perks that help towards keeping you-

A: Yeah.

DG: -fed and watered.

A: And so, when you talked about the two tonnes of coal – so, was the cottage centrally heated or was it open- just open fires or-?

DG: It was open fires, yes.

A: Yeah.

DG: They... I don't think... any of the first cottages I moved into, we never had any central heating. Eventually at one of my jobs they did the house up and put central heating in.

0h 24m 03s

A: Yeah.

DG: But in general... And in the house I'm in at the moment I've got one coal fire for the whole house and no other heat.

A: No other heating?

DG: Naw.

A: Right, ok.

DG: We're still living in the past. *[laughter]*.

A: Because-

DG: But part of that is by choice, of course.

A: Yeah, yeah it must be.

DG: I said I'm not too worried about central heating because I've never had it, really.

A: Right, ok.

DG: And you tend, and I mean, for someone that sleeps with the bedroom window open every single night in life, right through the winter, what's the point of having the heating on? *[laughter]*

A: Oh, right, cause I was gonna ask- I was just gonna say to you, y'know, in the old days when there wasn't any central heating, and we all sort of got up and washed in cold water in the morning and got on with it but you're still maintaining that habit, custom, yeah.

DG: Yes, I mean, well obviously we don't wash in the cold water but-

A: Hot water.

DG: We've got a power shower nowadays.

A: Yeah.

DG: But ye never had even showers in these days.

A: No, no.

DG: And ye had to have the fire on to get the water hot for the-

A: Yeah.

DG: For the baths, an everything. Which was quite- it was quite a difficult time to bring up the children.

A: Yes.

DG: Ye know, with all that, but we managed it an-

A: Yeah.

DG: And at the time I cannae remember that we ever really complained about our conditions, as such.

A: Right, no.

DG: The living conditions, while they might not have been ideal, seemed to be adequate for us-

A: Yeah.

DG: -if that's what you were used to, ye know.

A: Yeah, yeah. That's interesting. So, the children- you said the children were all born in different places, so they must- your eldest must have had to change school quite often?

DG: Yes, well, the first few years she was ok cause she was only like two and three, because I did- I was at Oxenfoord for three years-

A: Yeah.

DG: And she was only then I think three when her sister was born.

0h 26m 04s

A: Yeah.

DG: And then we were there for two years. Two and a half years, I think. An we moved to Barns Estate-

A: Yeah.

DG: So, really she wasnae at the school until she got to the Barns Estate.

A: Yeah.

DG: An at that point she did have to change, when we moved from there: Peebles to Innerleithen.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Although we could- we did have the option to leave her at the Peebles Primary but we didnae, we put her to...

A: Yeah.

DG: And the other ones have been lucky they didnae get to school until I'd kinda settled down for a few years-

A: Yeah.

DG: -at Glenormiston where we were for twenty-three years.

A: Oh, right. Well, so, what made you move from Oxenfoord? To Barns? And I'm not- Barns is in Peebles?

DG: It's in Peebles, Neidpath Castle an Barns Estate belong again tae the Lord-

A: Lord Wemyss.

DG: -Wemyss. Yes, it's a-

A: Right.

DG: -part of the Wemyss, eh, dynasty.

A: Yeah.

DG: It's a lovely place. The jobs as such, Oxenfoord was a very, very good partridge shoot, marvellous partridge shoot. Not sae good pheasant shoot but managed to get a pheasant shoot brought up an broke a couple records.

A: Yeah.

DG: Taking the bag size up slightly, which they were delighted with, obviously.

A: Yeah.

DG: The partridges then went downhill because- mainly because of the farming advancement. They went to more silage.

A: Right.

DG: Which were quicker machines, cutting faster.

A: Yeah.

DG: And partridges nested in the silage. So, the partridge bags went very quickly downhill over the three years.

A: Right. I didn't know- I wondered about that. That's really interesting, cause I prefer partridge to pheasants.

DG: Yes.

A: To eat.

0h 28m 01s

DG: Well I do, I do as well. Partridge is one of the best.

A: Mm, beautiful. So, when you talk about a 'bag', a partridge bag, a pheasant bag and that's the number of birds that are killed-

DG: Yes.

A: -on each shoot, yeah? Has that- has that number changed over the years?

DG: In these days, these were totally wild grey partridges. Nowadays you can go and get good bags of partridges on various estates because they're released and they're mainly red-legged French partridges.

A: Yes, yeah.

DG: And while they're very good and sporting, they're not grey. They're not English grey partridges. And there're very few places got real wild shoots now of English greys because of one: The farming practices.

A: Yeah.

DG: Because they live on insects and the chicks live on insects and if farmers spray for everything. You've the vermin problems that we've always had, a bit exaggerated now because we've got more and more because you're not allowed to control them.

A: Right.

DG: The birds of prey, the badgers, are a real problem. We never were allowed to control them in the past but there wasn't as many of them, so we didn't have the same problem. Badgers especially will go along a hedge line and clean every nest of partridges, ye know? And pheasants for that matter.

A: Right, ok.

DG: And that changes the situations. That changes the job.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Ye know?

A: Mm, yeah. That's interesting. So, you went- you went to Barns Estate and you- how long did you stay there?

DG: I moved to Barns Estate... Eh, I can't... I'm no very good with dates, I'm sorry about that. I should've had this for you but... Em, we moved to Barns- we obviously moved at the end of a- a shooting season. Ye didnae move anywhere-

0h 30m 11s

A: Yeah.

DG: -it was like the farmers, ye know they used to change jobs in the spring before the yearly tasks.

A: Yeah.

DG: Ye ken?

A: Yeah.

DG: So, I moved in a February or early March maybe.

A: Right.

DG: To Barns. The reason of going there was that it was a better- it was a better shoot.

A: Right. Ok.

DG: Ye know it was a step up in- another challenge really.

A: Right, ok.

DG: To go to Barns an handle a- which was a pretty good pheasant shoot when I got there, and while I worked for the Wemyss and March Estates, John Seagroatt [?] was the factor here at Gosford at the time.

A: John-? Sorry?

DG: Seagroatt.

A: Seagroatt. That's an unusual name. Yeah.

DG: Yes. A very regimented sergeant major type guy.

A: Ok.

DG: And, eh, didn't always see eye to eye.

A: Uhuh.

DG: But he was a very, very good man for the estate, in the old traditional ways.

A: Right, yeah, yeah.

DG: Ye know? And I sometimes wish he was back to see how things have changed. But we went there as a step up.

A: Right.

DG: And I was taken- Henry Ballantyne of Ballantyne Woollen Mills in Peebles-

A: Yes.

DG: -had the shooting- he was the shooting syndicate.

A: Right.

DG: And I was half employed by him and half employed by Wemyss and March Estates.

A: Ok.

DG: So we- there was a lot of rabbit problems there. We used tae kill a lot of rabbits, like two thousand a year, ye know, quite easily.

A: Right. And can I just ask you, by shooting them? Or how do you kill rabbits?

DG: Yes, mainly shooting-

A: Shooting them?

DG: -but also snaring.

A: Ok, yeah.

DG: We were allowed to snare.

A: Uhuh.

DG: And we didnae do anything illegal, as such.

0h 32m 01s

A: No, no.

DG: We would be bending rules occasionally, but I mean that's just...

A: Yeah. And was that- is that after or before the big myxomatosis, uh-?

DG: That was after, but-

A: The rabbits came back again-?

DG: Ye got them- they were pretty- you got stages where ye never got any myxomatosis for a certain period of time an if you had experience then you could tell which- when the good rabbits were worth having and not.

A: Yeah.

DG: And so we killed a lot of rabbits. We then built the pheasant shoot up, and broke all the records-

A: Right.

DG: -in the Henry Ballantyne era.

A: So, when you say 'broke records' can you just explain-

DG: In bag size-

A: Like the size of it?

DG: -of maybe 120 pheasants a day, going up to more than two hundred a day.

A: More than two hundred?

DG: Yes, in early shoots, ye know?

A: Ok. Yeah.

DG: Which again, Henry was delighted. He was an old school man, he has been there since his father had the shoot.

A: Yeah?

DG: And it was a good time. I liked working for him.

A: Right.

DG: He then decided, as you do- he was old, decided he was giving the shooting up.

A: Yeah.

DG: And I was a wee bit unsettled, just wi various things.

A: Mmhm.

DG: And decided tae move on. But Henry Ballantyne learned me a few things about the gentry-

A: Yeah.

DG: And the people I worked for. Because as a- one of the first shoots we had at Barns-

A: Yeah.

DG: And because I had worked for syndicates of farmers at my job previously, they were just ordinary, down to earth, rough and ready guys.

A: Yeah?

DG: Who spoke to me like I spoke to them.

A: Yeah.

DG: Well, we were driving the first or second drive through, and he started shouting Grieve do this and Grieve do that, so I got rather angry, ye know?

A: Uhuh.

DG: And when I came out the drive at the end he's shouting 'Grieve!' and I says 'yes, Ballantyne?' in a very unpleasant voice. Anyway, we carried on wi the day's shooting, nothing more was said. At the end of the day he took me aside, and he said, eh, 'Douglas', he made a point of calling me Douglas, 'I'm so sorry that you took offence to being called Grieve, but in my father's day, and mine, it was a mark of respect to call the head gamekeeper by his second name'.

A: A mark of respect? Right, yeah.

DG: Yes. So, it then changed my outlook and I apologised and said I'm so sorry, I just thought that ye were being a bit sort o uppity about ye know, I was the employee and you were the employer, an it turned out it wasn't that at all, so.

A: Ok.

DG: I then realised that a lot of the gentry standards and behaviour, while they were not disrespectful, it felt like it to the ordinary man.

A: Yes. Yeah.

DG: Which stands to this day, because as we know, people say to ye, ye know, how can you work for these people? You say, well, they're actually not what you think they are.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And they don't treat you like how you think they're treating ye. Ye know, so.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes.

DG: That was a lesson.

A: Yes, that's a very, very interesting one. And now times have changed and everyone is called by their first name.

DG: Yes.

A: Almost everyone.

DG: Almost everyone.

A: Almost everyone, yes. So, you get a phone call from someone and in two minutes they're calling you by your first name and you don't know who on earth they are.

DG: Yeah. Yes, well I mean the present Lord Wemyss he- he comes in when I see him in the mornings and he'll say 'morning Dougie' and shakes ma hand, every time I see him.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Quite marvellous.

0h 36m 01s

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And I don't- I mean I don't mind being called Dougie, or whatever, but... *[laughter]*. It was a lesson, it was a lesson we learned in the old days.

A: Yes, interesting. Yeah.

DG: Yes.

A: So, em, Barns Estate and then you moved to Glenormiston?

DG: Yes.

A: And so-

DG: Well, I was a wee bit unsettled at Barns because Henry Ballantyne was going to retire and I thought well, if you're retiring, am leaving an...

A: Yeah. So, you came to like him and respect him?

DG: Oh, I did, I did very much so.

A: Yeah.

DG: And at that time I was having a wee bit mebbe a wee bit of a difference of opinion wi Mr Seagroatt, who I did respect-

A: Mmhm.

DG: -just sometimes his manner upset me.

A: Mmhm.

DG: Anyway, I got the- a friend o mine at, eh, Hasting Estate, a chap called Colonel Sprott, Colonel Aidan Sprott, said to me 'Dougie, I have a friend who's just bought this new estate. It's not been shot on for a good few years, and em, he would like to take on a gamekeeper. Would you be interested? I know that you're unsettled and I suggest...' So, he arranged a meeting for me.

A: Mmhm?

DG: And I went down on a Sunday, it was the... I think it was the 13th o August, or... Cause they had been up an walked the small bit o grouse moor with his friends-

A: Right.

DG: -and eh-

A: And the 13th of August is significant-?

DG: Well, the grouse starts on the 12th.

A: On the 12th, yes.

DG: And they had been up and had a wee walk over his newly acquired bit o ground on the 12th.

A: Yes, yeah.

DG: I think they shot a brace and a half o grouse- I know they shot a brace and a half o grouse.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: So, I met this Mr Hogg, Mr John Hogg at Glenormiston, who was- he was an underwriter with Lloyds. An he was also the Hogg in the Hogg Robinson Group, which is a massive insurance conglomerate.

A: Right, ok.

DG: So, and they- he intimated to me at the time that he wanted to take on a gamekeeper cum farmhand, suchlike. I then said no, yer either a gamekeeper, or yer a farmhand, ye can't do both. He said this is not a very big estate. I says it's big enough if yer gonna look after a lot of pheasants.

0h 38m 20s

A: Uhuh.

DG: So, we came to the agreement that I wasn't going to be interested if it was a combined job, only a gamekeeping job.

A: Mmhm.

DG: So, he took- he took me to show me the house that I was gonna be provided wi, an said that he would give me all the required perks that I asked for, suchlike.

A: Yeah.

DG: But he would think about it. Anyway, he came back to me and said 'yes, I think you're right, we should just have you as the gamekeeper'.

A: Right, ok.

DG: And it went from there.

A: You stuck to your guns. *[laughter]*.

DG: Yes, well, I mean it was... People don't really know if you're out at daylight in the morning an you're doin fulltime gamekeeping an doin it properly, in the summer yer out at daylight. And sometimes daylight till daylight ends.

A: Right, so the hours can be quite long?

DG: The hours can be quite long, yer out killing vermin at that time o the morning, foxes and suchlike.

A: Yeah.

DG: An then you're feeding your pheasants an maybe rearing on the rearing field. An then down, an I had the river to look after at Glenormiston as well. The river Tweed. So, I mean there was plenty to do, without sayin, this is the harvesttime, we need you to help during the day.

A: Yeah.

DG: But they then wanted me to do the gamekeeping on my own time.

A: Yeah.

DG: Which doesn't- it's not right.

A: No, no.

DG: An it happens a lot nowadays, there's loads of part-time gamekeepers that unfortunately need to do it in their own time.

A: Yeah.

DG: And that's just a- one of the things that's changed in the gamekeeping world.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I wonder why that is?

DG: I think it's... I've not really got any explanation for that because there's so many good, big shoots. They're just- farmers and the landowners seem to have maybe not got quite as much money as they did have, or not got the spare cash that they can lose the same.

Changes in Gamekeeping Practices – 0h 40m 20s

A: Mmhm, mmhm.

DG: Because obviously, unless you're doing a commercial shoot-

A: Yeah.

DG: -it's mainly money out an no money in.

A: Yes.

DG: As far as the gamekeeping goes.

A: Yeah. And is the process- has the process changed very much? The gamekeeper's job, I mean... do you do more rearing of pheasants then you used to do?

DG: Oh, yes. In the old days, in... Even when I first started they were coming in to the rearing of pheasants an you would maybe put down- you would have a surplus of wild stock.

A: Yeah.

DG: But then you would say, well I want to put more of that tae have a bigger bag, a bigger-

A: Yeah.

DG: -bag again. Ok, we'll put five hundred, eh, six-week-old poults down or rear...

A: Six-week-old whats?

DG: Poults.

A: Poults, oh, poults.

DG: That's what we call pheasant poultry.

A: Pheasant poult, yeah.

DG: Or you could rear them from day-olds, which a lot o gamekeepers did.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: And depending on what kinda job you're in.

A: Yeah.

DG: And I think that is maybe one of the reasons that it has changed slightly, because there's more game farms now, who provide these pheasants at six weeks old.

A: Yeah.

DG: And in olden days the gamekeepers reared them themselves from- they hatched them.

A: Yeah.

DG: Reared them from the day-old chicks.

A: Yeah.

DG: Until they were put out to the wood.

A: Right.

DG: Nowadays you don't really- if you've not got a fulltime gamekeeper, ye can still buy pheasants in and get someone part-time who'll feed them three times a day or twice a day an-

A: Yeah.

DG: -mebbe not even seven days a week, depending on how many birds they've put down.

0h 42m 03s

A: Right. So, they can cut corners-

DG: They can cut some corners.

A: They can cut corners with the job.

DG: They definitely have.

A: Yeah.

DG: In my opinion, not a good thing because they- their returns, their returns being the percentage of what you would rear and put out-

A: Yeah.

DG: -to what you actually had a return – your bag at the end of the season.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Your totals.

A: Mmhm.

DG: The percentage was always higher an a did keep quite a lot of good records.

A: Yeah.

DG: The percentage was always higher when I reared them from day-old returns than they were when we started to buy them in at six and seven-week old.

A: That's very interesting.

DG: Em, and I think it's because they were- they were implanted into the estate, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: When they were a very young age.

A: Yes. And you said records there- so was it part of your job to- to keep the record of how many-

DG: Yes.

A: You know, what went on-

DG: There was-

A: A game book or something.

DG: Each estate had a game book, a register-

A: Yeah.

DG: -if ye like. Of where you registered yer game for each day.

A: Yeah.

DG: An... It was kept for years and years, some very fabulous old game books. And obviously... I did keep a game book of ma own.

A: Right, ok.

DG: Which I still have.

A: Oh right.

DG: But they used to take them cause they were fancy bound, proper game registers-

A: Yeah.

DG: And very impressive, because you could go back an say 'oh my god I've not done as well as the gamekeeper did in 1902, or something ye know. [*laughter*]. So.

A: Yeah, gosh.

DG: So, it was- that was all part o the game, an it gave you an idea of what to aim for an, as I say, Glenormiston hadn't been shot on for a long, long time.

A: Mmhm, mmhm.

DG: And it was a chap, Sandeman, that had it before my boss bought it which was the sherry people. Yes, ye know?

Oh 44m 03s

A: Yeah.

DG: I think everyone knows this.

A: Sandeman, yeah.

DG: Em, so we built it up for him. We started off wi three days of the season, for a season.

A: Yeah.

DG: And we ended up after all the years I was there, shooting nine different days.

A: Now, you say nine days, is that over the shooting season?

DG: Yes. Over the shooting season. From the-

A: That's from-

DG: We never used tae start until the end of November because ye give the birds time to get really mature, an really wild, an fly better, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: We werenae intae shooting chickens jumping fences an that, ye know?

A: Ok. Yeah, ok.

DG: And it was- it went- the bags went from, varying from a hundred and then till- a had days where we used to shoot over three hundred an odds. Very high pheasants. Very sporting birds in the borders-

A: By high, you mean high up in the air?

DG: Yes, they- they werenae coming off the sides of woodlands, whereas a lot of East Lothian – Gosford is one – it's dead flat, it's obviously not so easy to get your pheasants to fly.

A: Mmhm.

DG: An really good sportsmen love to go for the high birds-

A: High.

DG: -rather than the lower.

A: Yeah.

DG: They don't want to blow birds up, they want tae kill them cleanly an find a sporting bird, as you would call them.

A: Right, ok. So, you're talking about all these birds... So what proportion of the shoot did you get? Was that one of the perks of the job? Did you get pheasants?

DG: No, no. No.

A: No?

DG: I mean I could have pheasants at any time.

A: Right.

DG: In my career.

A: Yeah.

DG: But ye didnae want pheasant, because I used tae rear them – yer rearing thousands – you worked wi them from when they're day-olds-

A: Yeah.

DG: An you reared them, you reared them from the day-old... The very... That day that ye get them from the hatchery-

A: Yeah.

DG: Ye then put them under heaters, ye have to check the heaters every two hours right through the night for the first few days.

A: Through the night?

DG: Yes.

A: You were getting up every night-

DG: Getting up every two hours to check, sometimes didnae go to bed, just lay on the settee, or whatever.

A: Uhuh.

DG: An then you... You reared them right through, same thing, ye used to get up in the middle of the night if the rain got heavy because when they got tae a stage when you had to harden them off-

A: Yeah.

DG: -when they were coming off the heat-

A: Yeah.

DG: -an they were gonna be getting ready to go out to the wood.

A: Mmhm.

DG: Ye then had tae harden them off.

A: Right.

D: But then a shower would come in the middle of the night- oh, up and out.

A: Oh, hello we've got a visitor. *[laughter]*. ...

A: So, uh Dougie, you were telling me that you- I asked you if you ate the birds and you said that well, when you'd reared them from day-old, and so are actually going to say to me you couldn't bear to eat them? *[laughter]*.

DG: Well, yes, I said we reared them from day-old, then till six or seven weeks old you put them out to the woods, ye then fed them every day o yer life until the end of the shooting season, which was February. Ye then had a month off, ye then caught all the pheasants up that you could. The hen pheasants you used to catch. Ye made special catchers to catch them.

A: Uhuh.

DG: An then we penned them in.

A: Uhuh.

DG: An then we took the eggs off the hens.

A: Yeah.

DG: An then started the process all over again. So, when yer working wi that many pheasants for that long in a year-

A: Uhuh.

DG: Yer not really wanting to eat too many o them.

A: No.

DG: Occasionally, I would have one or- for ma dinner. My wife at the time didn't particularly like game. So, everything else I love. I mean, wood cock's ma absolute favourite.

0h 48m 07s

A: Yeah.

DG: English grey partridge is tae die for.

A: Mmhm.

DG: Ducks- wild ducks – mallard and teal duck – are wonderful. And venison.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: An the- obviously the most common, a lot o the wood pigeon.

A: Yeah. And do you eat wood pigeon?

DG: Yes, oh aye, wood pigeon was one o the staples. We always made oor tattie soup-

A: Ok.

DG: That was the stock.

A: Pigeon stock?

DG: Yeah, pigeons were in the soup. And then we used to have them, an I use to have them cold on buttered roll, or a buttered bit o bread an that was delicious.

A: And are you going back to your childhood when you talk about this?

DG: I'm going back to the days wi my grandfather, yes. An my father. We had all that sort a thing. Wood pigeon, rabbit, hare. An obviously fish I guess, while we're going back to that my father used tae spear flounders in Aberlady Bay, in the Peffer Burn.

A: Oh, right, yeah.

DG: And we used to eat flounders.

A: Right. No, flounders, you don't see flounders anywhere on the fish van or the fish shop.

DG: No, very rarely. The flounders are a flat fish-

A: Yeah?

DG: An blends obviously into- an av very vivid recollections, an probably when I was- one of my youngest ever recollections is going down intae the Peffer Burn when the tide had gone out an-

A: Yeah.

DG: An you would be walking an you would stand on a flounder, an it would move a bit. An we had spears like with a barb on it.

A: Yeah.

DG: An ye watched where the flounder went an then you got it. An I have that vivid recollection. I don't know what age I would be, I was pretty young. An we used to do it. So, we've eaten game and fish an suchlike for all o my life.

0h 50m 05s

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's-

DG: Quite...

A: What other- what other foods can you recall eating as a child that's really different from nowadays?

DG: There's not a lot different, I mean out father didn't have a very well-paid job, so enough to keep four kids.

A: Yeah.

DG: Ye know? An obviously my mum wasnae working when the kids- when we were all young.

A: Mmhm.

DG: So we ate very basically.

A: Yeah.

DG: Chips and egg, mainly an we always grew our own vegetables-

A: Did you?

DG: -in the garden an that was one o the jobs when ye came home from the school, tae dig the tatties for tonight's tea.

A: Yeah?

DG: An if ye didnae do it, ye got a clip round the lug.

A: [laughter]

DG: And eh, we'd mince and tatties, ye know, veg obviously out the garden. The one thing a can remember vividly ma mother used to cook regularly an a just could not force maself to eat was tripe.

A: Oh, right. Yeah.

DG: Everyone else in the family seemed to love it but that's one thing that used to- 'am not having that for ma tea'.

A: And tripe is part- which part-?

DG: It's the stomach of the cows.

A: The cow, yeah.

DG: Yeah.

A: Yeah. It's quite Scottish, isn't it?

DG: It's very Scottish, an actually as a gamekeeper, when a moved onto being a gamekeeper, a lot o gamekeepers used to buy the raw tripes off the slaughterhouse an used to have it hanging on a tree or on the washing line if the wife wasnae too bitter at ye.

A: Uhuh?

DG: An cut a chunk off everyday for the dogs.

A: Oh, right.

DG: That's how ye fed your dogs, it was cheap, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: Ye got it from just pennies, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: And eh, it kept the dogs in wonderful condition.

0h 52m 02s

A: Oh right.

DG: But ye wouldnae want to feed it to dogs ye kept in the house.

A: Right, cause it's smelly?

DG: A bit smelly, yes. *[laughter]*.

A: Good gracious. *[laughter]*. So, back to- go back to- cause you mentioned something earlier on, you were working at Glenormiston and that job came to an abrupt end, I think you said?

DG: Yes, well, after twenty-three wonderful years there-

A: Yeah?

DG: Which I did the fishing, when we used to have fishing clients in the summer for the salmon run.

A: Mmhm.

DG: An used tae fish the trout there, ye know? It was wonderful. After a day- night working in the rearing field wi all the pheasants, all the dust and suchlike, you would go down an have a night in the river, last half an hour an catch half a dozen trout for your supper.

A: Yeah.

DG: Ye can't do that nowadays because there's not as many trout because as the increase in vermin as much as- anyway.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Yes, an as I say we had many lovely years there, an my boss was a wonderful man. He had his own landing strip at Glenormiston.

A: Mmhm.

DG: An he would fly in from Kent quite- throughout the shooting season and the fishing season.

A: Yeah. Did he live in Kent?

DG: He lived in Kent-

A: Oh, he had a house in Kent-

DG: An he was an absentee landlord.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: One day he took off in his plane an was never seen again.

A: Oh, goodness.

DG: They found the remains... An the plane had... He was seventy-eight at the time.

A: Seventy-eight?

DG: Still flying his own private plane.

A: Oh, right. Yeah, yeah.

DG: So, that was nothing short of an absolute tragedy for him obviously and his family.

A: Yeah.

DG: But a disaster for our family because-

A: Yes.

DG: We were then- it was the end of an era. For me, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: After all these years.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: The family didn't want to keep it on.

A: Right.

DG: They did let it out for a year, but weren't satisfied wi the people that took it, an then the daughters decided to sell the estate.

A: Right, ok.

DG: Hopefully it was going to be sold as a sporting venture but it didn't work out that way an I was consequently made redundant.

A: Made redundant, yeah. And was that the first time in your life that you'd been made redundant?

DG: No, I had been made redundant when I worked at McKettrick-Agnew.

A: Oh, right, yeah.

DG: At one point I was made redundant there.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: So, I was used tae it – if ye can ever get used to being made redundant.

A: You'd experienced it before.

DG: It's a wee bit of a blow.

A: Yeah, yeah. I think so- it's, um, maybe it isn't so much... There was a kind of stigma attached to losing your job, I think more so than now, possibly. It was quite big- it was a kind of big moment in life, wasn't it?

DG: Yes. The thing that I found about it was going to the dole office.

A: Yeah.

DG: An having to sign a bit a paper for them to give you some money.

A: Yes.

DG: When ye'd worked for it.

A: You'd worked hard and-

DG: An I mean av always been in work apart from the two times I was made redundant.

A: Yeah.

DG: Luckily in both cases I got reemployed pretty quickly.

A: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

DG: So, I was never unfortunate enough to be out for a long time.

A: A long time, yeah, yeah. Which is great but you- as you say you had the skills but you mentioned that your age apparently was against you when you went for the next-

DG: Yes.

A: When you tried to get a job.

DG: Yes.

A: Which is astonishing.

DG: I thought at fifty-three years old you would still be young enough to be of use to some people.

A: Yes!

0h 56m 02s

DG: And- but I did apply for a few jobs, an in every case was like 'sorry, you're not successful,' and one or two did tell you why that if it wasn't for your age – 'we want a younger man'.

A: Right, ok. They can't say that to you nowadays.

DG: Well, so I believe.

A: No. *[laughter]*.

DG: Yeah, em-

A: So.

DG: That's disappointing in a way, an it did make me feel a bit bitter about the industry, as such, ye know?

A: Mm.

DG: Because with the experience, I had a good name, I'd had run a top-class pheasant shoot for a lot o years-

A: Yeah.

DG: You would've thought someone might've given you a chance.

A: Yes, yeah.

DG: An maybe, maybe if I'd kept trying an been a month or two down the line, I may have been more successful, we don't know. It wasn't the best o times when they paid me off. They didn't actually pay me off until the beginning of August.

A: Uhuh?

DG: Which was just before the grouse shooting season and the pheasant raising seasons, an it's full on so.

A: Yeah.

DG: Anyway, they were a bit unfair in that, but it was mainly the management company I think, rather than, uh- I don't want to think ill of Mr Hogg's daughters because he was good to me an I...

A: Yeah. But you know that the- your job always had a tied house? Which was something that was quite normal then, it's less normal nowadays, I think. But so that must have presented a problem to you?

DG: Yes.

A: Finding somewhere else to live?

DG: I was given a certain amount of time to get outta the house.

A: Oh right.

DG: I think it was two months or something.

A: Ok.

DG: And while I could've probably stayed longer if I felt a bit unwelcome or maybe even slightly bitter that after all these years of service you're gonna get put out on your ear but ken, they were selling the estate and the houses go with the estate, so.

0h 58m 10s

A: Yeah.

DG: I was man enough to know that- and experienced enough to know that was gonna happen.

A: Yeah.

DG: I came to East Lothian looking for a cottage. I found out that the cottage, the one at eleven now was empty, next door to where I used to live.

A: Yeah.

DG: And I came to see the factor here and asked about the cottage, and that's when I was offered the job as caretaker handyman.

A: Right, ok.

DG: And that's how I ended up back at- and once again I was only, sorta unemployed for about four weeks, ye know?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DG: So, I've been lucky cause I know loads of people that've-

A: Yeah.

DG: Lost their jobs an never got another one, so.

A: Yeah. So, you came here in- back here in, what year was that? Roughly.

DG: Well, that would be... Well, eh fourteen years ago, thirteen years ago.

A: Right, ok.

DG: Thirteen years ago, so, that would be '05, is it?

A: Yeah, ok.

DG: '05.

A: So, are your children all grown up?

DG: My children-

A: Fled the nest?

DG: Yes, ma children are all... Well, my oldest one's forty-two, so.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: That'll give you an idea that they're all away and settled.

A: Yeah, uhuh. But I'm interested in- you said you skipped school – I bet you didn't let your children skip school?

DG: I certainly did not! No, although I did have a lot of bother with my son cause he was right into the gamekeeping as he had been- ye know, he was brought up with it.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: An on shooting days, I had aw awfy bother to get him tae- 'I want to come to the shoot'. An he used to help me feed the pheasants and he used tae kill some vermin, an suchlike, ye know?

A: Yeah.

DG: So, it was a kinda... Occasionally, I'd bend the rules an let his mother think that he'd gone to the school.

01h 00m 06s

A: *[laughter]* I knew there'd be something!

DG: Yeah, but she always went to work before me, so. 'Make sure he goes to the school today!' Um, yes.

A: But he turned- I believe you said this to me before, but he actually joined the police force?

DG: Yes.

A: Yes?

DG: He had a colourful start to his days, as well because he went to be- I got him a job as a butcher apprentice with friends of mine in Peebles.

A: Yeah.

DG: Forsyth's the Butcher's. Very famous. An then he wanted- I got him a gamekeeper's job-

A: Mmhm.

DG: -through a friend o mine through in Ayrshire, an when he was seventeen he was at Sorn Castle in Ayrshire.

A: Yeah.

DG: And em, he lived in a house away on a moor on his own, which was very brave at seventeen.

A: Yeah.

DG: An we actually went out to Ireland to look at a job.

A: Mmhm.

DG: Which he got offered.

A: Yeah.

DG: But didn't take cause it was too far away from his mummy.

A: Aww. *[laughter]*.

DG: But he then progressed into the civil service, he got made redundant actually, at Sorn Castle as a gamekeeper.

A: Mmhm.

DG: And he went into the civil service where his mother worked.

A: Yeah.

DG: And he was doing well there-

A: Yeah.

DG: -when he come to me and said 'Dad, I've got some bad news for you', because I wasn't exactly a great police lover, I'm afraid. Just, not because I was a lawbreaker, was just-

A: No.

DG: -various dealings wi them that upset me.

A: Yeah.

DG: Anyway, he's now a police sergeant, yeah, an he's doing that...

A: Yeah.

DG: So, he's- all these experiences havenae done him any harm an-

A: No.

DG: He probably can suss out people a bit better wi what he's learned.

A: I think, yeah, I would think so.

DG: Yes.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, you're a man of the land, from start and still today. You're a man of the land.

01h 02m 04s

DG: Yes, I've been- I've just always been of the land. I keep racing pigeons-

A: You keep racing pigeons?

DG: I've kept racing pigeons since I was fourteen.

A: Right, so what started that?

DG: I used to go to the- at Longniddry Station, which used to have big buildings for the [insidings?] and suchlike, not like it's known, like what it is now.

A: Uhuh.

DG: They used to mark the pigeons, which is race mark them ready to go to the race on the Friday evening, in the station.

A: Right.

DG: Cause all the pigeons in these days travelled on rail.

A: Right.

DG: An as a boy ye would be kicking yer heels around the village and started to go up there, an get really interested in them, and from there ye get- ye want a couple of pigeons an...

A: Uhuh.

DG: Went from a couple of pigeons tae more-

A: Yeah.

DG: -pigeons until I was racing the pigeons an I've actually had them all ma life.

A: Good gracious.

DG: An I've held various posts – secretary, treasurers-

A: Of the?

DG: Of the various pigeon organisations wherever I lived.

A: Uhuh?

DG: And at the moment, I'm president of the East of Scotland Federation.

A: Oh, are you? Oh right.

DG: For racing pigeons, yeah.

A: Yeah. Right, ok. And is that activity- has that developed, has it got more popular, less popular?

DG: It has very much went downhill.

A: Yeah.

DG: Obviously wi East Lothian being a miners' area-

A: Yeah.

DG: It was mainly miners, ye know?

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Interestingly, Peter Rennock, the old gamekeeper at Gosford was a member of the old pigeon club.

A: Yeah.

DG: Which was- the first pigeon club I joined was Aberlady.

A: Uhuh.

DG: And also interestingly, Lord Neidpath, who is now the present Lord Wemyss.

A: Ah.

DG: Was a member of that Aberlady pigeon club.

A: Was he really?

DG: In partnership with the forester at the time's son.

01h 04m 03s

A: Right.

DG: A chap called David Haldane [?] and they were members of Aberlady pigeon club as Haldane an Neidpath, or Neidpath an Haldane.

A: Haldane. His title.

DG: His title, yes.

A: Comes first. He's a pigeon fancier?

DG: Well, he was a pigeon fancier, and he still shows an interest in pigeons and actually him and Lady Wemyss have appeared up an come into ma loft, in my garden, just unannounced.

A: Ok.

DG: So, an they're very welcome.

A: Yeah, of course.

DG: Yeah. So, with the pigeons, yer out- ye know, you're interested in all things wildlife an birds an-

A: Yeah.

DG: I've been a fisherman-

A: Right.

DG: -most of ma days.

A: Yeah.

DG: Eh...

A: Do you still fish?

DG: Yes, occasionally, yes. I still go down an fish on my old estate at Glenormiston, and at Barns Estate, at my old estates.

A: Mmhm.

DG: Given any opportunity, I'll go and fish for salmon usually.

A: Yeah.

DG: Not very successfully, the last few years. Although, I used to be no bad... These things all roll on to the land an whatever, ye know, dinnae get me wrong I've also been... I played darts for many, many years, at quite a good level. I played football at a good level, I played rugby, I was a good swimmer at the school, I won medals at the school.

A: Right, ok.

DG: So, I've been pretty active.

A: Yeah.

DG: In everything. But my main thing in life was the countryside an the land, an there was a conflict- a possibly could have been a bit more- I probably could have been a professional footballer if-

A: Really?

DG: If I hadnae- wouldnae go to play because I was going to a shoot.

A: Oh, right, ok.

DG: And I wouldnae turn up for- an then of course they didnae like that, ye know.

01h 06m 04s

A: No. So, did you play football in-

DG: I played football in East Lothian and Midlothian. I played in Macmerry for a club called Lothian Rose who were a very, very, very good side in these days.

A: Mmhm.

DG: I think the furthest we ever got was the quarterfinals of the Scottish Amateur Cup, but that's like six hundred teams or something so that was a pretty big thing to play.

A: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DG: I played for a team called Ferranti Thistle, which was part of the company.

A: Yeah.

DG: Which are now- who developed into Meadowbank Thistle, who are now Livingston FC, who have just got into the Scottish premier, so.

A: Yeah.

DG: They are-

A: So, there you are.

DG: I played a couple of senior trials, and played junior.

A: Mmhm.

DG: And East o Scotland League, which was semi-professional but I didnae get any money-

A: Yeah.

DG: I was just young and didnae play enough games to. So, I, uh, I had a... And I did have a chance to go to New Zealand and play as a semi-professional football player and I was going to go and do the engineering along with that but unfortunately my father-in-law was killed, em, when we were in the process of moving.

A: Ah.

DG: We were going to move to New Zealand, me and my wife at the time.

A: Oh. Right.

DG: So, things-

A: Changed.

DG: -could've- ma whole life could've been totally different.

A: Different.

DG: But I'm glad it's turned out the way it has.

A: Yes, that's good. That's good. So, the big question, you know, you're the country man, you're the epitome of a country man, but you must be very aware of how things have changed, and how perceptions are changing about wildlife. Killing birds, shooting birds, hunting.

DG: Yes.

A: And protection of all these 'vermin', you call them vermin: badgers-

DG: Yes.

01h 08m 02s

A: -um, birds of prey. I'm interested in your view of that.

DG: Yeah, well my view is... I call them all vermin because in a gamekeeper's eyes, anything that kills your stock-

A: Yeah.

DG: -is the enemy.

A: Yeah.

DG: The vermin.

A: Yeah.

DG: Now, I've not been a- one of the gamekeepers that's been a lawbreaker. I'm no saying that I havenae occasionally bent a rule, but if you've to stick to the rules then you've got to stick to the rules. So, you have to try an do your job. It's very difficult nowadays- the badgers are- you'd hardly know in the old days there wasnae a badger sett on Gosford that I knew of.

A: Mmhm?

DG: There is now... Probably in the twenties of badger setts, which most people won't know because they're not observant enough to see things in the countryside. The birds o prey have got so much protection, an always have had, in my sorta lifetime, and make life very, very difficult. And there's various other birds of prey that've been encouraged, like goshawks an buzzards an sparrow hawks are all birds that cause quite a bit o carnage in the game world. But we've learned to live wi it, as best we can. It doesnae say that it sits well wi us, an I wouldn't dream of trying to get myself in trouble or Lord Wemyss or the factor because of taking oot a bird of prey when, after all, we've not got a big argument when we're rearing the birds to shoot them.

A: Yeah.

DG: An we're wanting to kill these birds to stop them from killing our birds for shooting, so we've got to look at it that way.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: As I say, it's not easy, it's very, very difficult. I also have the situation where the birds o prey have a bad effect on ma racing pigeons, cause the whole racing pigeon fraternity are troubled with the returns because of attacks of peregrine falcons, an the sparrow hawks kill the pigeons round yer loft. Again, we use various deterrents, like balloons an flashing lights an whatever to keep within the law.

01h 10m 31s

A: Yeah.

DG: An trying to just live an let live – which gamekeepers have always done, although people don't realise that. They think, oh you're killing for killing's sake. No, we're killing vermin, controlling, I would say, rather than killing for the sake of the countryside an the job. If anything gets over imbalanced, like foxes I'm talking aboot, the vermin, you would have a terrible time if ye let the country be overrun with foxes. They're not a natural predator, for these kinda... And then you've got the smaller vermin which we would call like the stoats, the weasels, which are not as prevalent nowadays, especially in East Lothian.

A: Mmhm.

DG: But then they were mainly rabbit eaters an there's not the rabbits in East Lothian there used to be. And certainly not here in Gosford.

A: Uhuh, uhuh.

DG: So, yeah the vermin is very much a concern... But I think our hands are tied and I think the gamekeeping world's gonna go downhill because of... And even the legal ways of catching foxes – the snaring – has got rules now, which make it virtually impractical to use them.

A: Yeah.

DG: I have done the course and I have... I have applied the practice but very ineffective. Which, I think the antis want this to happen because they say well, we'll give you rules, but these rules'll make you ineffective, ye know?

01h 12m 14s

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: We have the same with the traps.

A: Mmhm.

DG: The Fenn traps especially are gonna be made obsolete shortly, and other traps over the years, and the snaring has got to be done under licence or... And the traps, 'oh this is going to take too long to put things out of their misery so we're banning that'. Anything that was effective, they're effectively banning.

A: Right.

DG: Now, the same with the crow traps that we had some really good Larsen traps, and suchlike. Very effective, very good. But you've got to stick right to their rules. And their rules make it – they know that, I'm sure they do, and it's... That's a gamekeeper's point of view, of course.

A: Yeah, yeah.

DG: But it does make life very difficult. And just to say that with all these things we have the general public, who are now obviously much more in the countryside than they ever have been, who have mobile phones, who take photographs, of a poor animal which may be caught. And not intentionally cause everything's set humanely, but there is an occasional thing that gets caught and it may be caught by the leg or... They then take photographs of that and get the gamekeepers in trouble, and the landlords in trouble, so it's not really... Unless these things are giving you individual... Em, trouble-

A: Yeah.

DG: It's probably not worth the effort to try and control.

A: Yes, yeah, yeah. So, well that's – as you said that's a gamekeeper's – your world is the gamekeeper's world, and it's been your career and I suppose you see it from one side, and thank you very much for giving me all that information about your gamekeeping life in 2018.

01h 14m 21s

DG: That's ok.

A: Thank you, Douglas Henderson Grieve.

DG: No problem.

A: Dougie! *[laughter]*.

