

Interviewee(s): Jim Logan (JL)	Interviewer(s): Janis Macdonald (JM)
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REGION	East Lothian
COUNTY	Haddingtonshire
TOWN/VILLAGE	Haddington

TITLE	<i>Janis Macdonald interviews Jim Logan.</i>
REGION	<i>Lothian</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Rural life, family, delivery jobs, World War Two, national service, returning from war.</i>
COUNTY	<i>East Lothian</i>
TOWN	<i>Haddington</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>9 May 2019</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Janis Macdonald</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Janis Macdonald interviews Jim Logan about his life. They discuss his childhood background, growing up as the oldest of eight children, in a rural community. They discuss school, as well as leaving school at the age of thirteen and a half to get a job and support his family further as the oldest of eight siblings. Jim discusses working as a milk deliveryman, and for the Haddington Co-op delivering and picking up goods for people. He then goes on to describe working as a butcher. Then they discuss Jim's role in World War Two more closely, training in England before travelling to north Africa. They also discuss events in Italy and staying on after the war to help the Italian people settle. Finally, they discuss the return to East Lothian after the war.</i>

Keywords: Background; After School; Gladshot Farm; Childhood; Delivery Job; The Haddington Co-op; Working in the Butcher's Shop; National Service; World War Two; North Africa during the War; End of the War; Italy; After the War.

Background – 0h 00m 00s

JL: I think maybe I'll start when I was born.

JM: Ok, I'll start first and this is Janis Macdonald, and I'm in Crookston Care Home and I'm with Jim Logan. So if you just- if you would introduce yourself, please?

JL: Well, I was born on 1/12/17 and I never [tell anybody?] or anything like that- beg pardon. I says that's right so, eh... Oh, where was I? I was born at Prora Farm, down near Drem.

JM: Right.

JL: Ye know of it?

JM: I know the name but...

JL: Ah, well, that's where I was born. And then sometime or other we must've moved tae Harelaw Farm, just outside Longniddry. Ye know that? It's now a riding stable or something.

Unknown: Yeah.

JL: I started school there, and then on the farms when the 28th of May came round, most of the workers changed their job with different farmers because I think it was a shilling a fortnight extra, or where they were staying, or working at that time and then... If their house got dirty they would leave that job and go oot and probably get a cleaner one [*laughter*].

JM: So was that like a hiring fair? Did you go to a hiring fair where you would go and get another job?

JL: Uhuh.

JM: Yes?

JL: The hiring was in... Sometime in May and...

0h 02m 02s

Unknown: It was the 28th of May in the Corn Exchange in Haddington, wasn't it?

JL: Aye, aye, somewhere about then.

Unknown: Yeah.

Unknown 2: Market Street used to have it...

JL: Oh, it did. Anyway, I went tae school and when we were having our dinner at night, my dad says to me 'how did ye get on at school today?' 'Oh', I says, 'I don't think I'll go back' [*laughter*]. 'Oh, what's the matter with it like?' 'Well', I says, 'there's no point in me sitting in a room all day long when I could be back here playing outside and...' [*laughter*]. And then we moved tae a place called Redshill, it's a part up near Gifford, up near the golf course. And I was there, went to Gifford school and the farmer smoked [gold flake] cigarettes and there were cigarette packets all over the farm, everywhere ye went. So I always went about, picking up them and looking for cigarette cards. And after that I just tore them up, because I knew there was no point in picking them up because they'd be no cards. And I used to help the farmer on a Saturday morning, up in what they called the granary. It's a big place in- it's to make up all the cattle feed. Eh, [locusts] and all that sort o stuff. Mebbe ye've never heard of it but that's it, and then I got friendly wi a guy called Marcus Brown and his father was the gamekeeper wi the Marquis of Tweeddale. And I used to go there and go to the beating, up in the hills, and I was raising the grouse and all that for the shooters. And then I got- in the wintertime ye went round the fields, locally, and did the same job, and I'll tell you it was a hard job, tramping up on the Lammermuirs.

0h 04m 54s

JM: How old would you be?

JL: Oh, just... Eh, about six or seven.

JM: Really?

Unknown: Six or seven, jeez.

JM: Gosh.

JL: Well I was always keen to work an ye know... So, after that... Where was I? I went from Redshill to... Can't remember these things...

Unknown: Ye stayed at the Coates Farm at one time.

JL: Eh?

Unknown: Ye stayed at the Coates Farm at one time. Did ye move from Redshill down to Coates?

JL: One of they thing, they run away from ye. Ye know, ye cannae...

Unknown: Yeah.

JL: Anyway, I used tae go to the shooting in the hills in the early winter. And then the local farms when it was the wintertime. Ye just raised the hares and suchlike, and then, eh, when we... Oh, jeez. I think we must've went to Merryhatton, aye?

0h 06m 26s

Unknown: Yeah, ye lived along the Pencaitland Road, didn't ye?

JL: Aye.

Unknown: What was that place called?

JL: Nisbet Farm, but I think that was after.

Unknown: Uhhuh.

JL: Och.

JM: You've been around in lots of different farms though, didn't ye?

JL: Yeah.

JM: And Gary said ye worked with Clydesdale horses. Were they on the farms?

JL: Clydesdale horses?

JM: Yes, did ye look-?

JL: I don't think so.

JM: No?

Unknown: Remember you said that on a Saturday morning ye used to help out at the farm?

JL: Oh, aye, I did, aye. Oh, I did that all the time.

Unknown: Yeah, cause when granddad would be out working with the horses and ye would help muck them out? At the weekends?

JM: What sorts of jobs would ye do on the farm to help out?

Unknown: Eh, I'm not sure.

JL: Anyway, so I went- I think I moved from Redshill Farm to... Och aye, I can't mind of it.

Unknown: You've been in quite a few places though?

JL: Eh?

Unknown: Every couple of years ye were moving round wi yer family to somewhere new.

JL: Aye. Well, I worked at, eh... Och...

Unknown: Well, when ye left school – ye left school at fourteen, didn't ye? Was it fourteen? When ye left school?

After School – 0h 08m 02s

JL: No, I left when a was thirteen and a half.

Unknown: Uhuh?

JM: Gosh.

JL: Because a was the oldest of eight, and ma mother she had a hard life, and a wanted tae leave school to get a job and help her. And that was the only year that a got prize at school. And a was only fourth. However, I got a job an a worked with the guy that worked wi ma father, and ma father worked for him and, eh... It was a- like a- I worked on a farm but they grew strawberries and all that, vegetables, and they took them to market in Edinburgh.

JM: Oh, right.

JL: And, eh, they were eh- ye had the old clappers and they went round the field aw day long, to keep the birds from eating the strawberries. And then...

JM: It wasn't Dovecot, was it? No?

Unknown: I'm not sure. Where was that about, Jim? Where was-?

JL: Gladshot.

Unknown: Gladshot?

JL: Aye.

Unknown: Oh, yeah. That's along Pencaitland Road.

JM: Right. I just- I wondered if it was Dovecot because they had a lot of strawberries too. Yeah.

Unknown: Was that your job, Jim? Wi these clappers?

JL: Aye.

Unknown: To go round and scare the birds?

JL: They had the same job.

Unknown: Uhuh?

JL: And when a was... Left school, I had- ma dad bought me an old lady's bicycle, and a worked at Hawthornbank in Haddington. Ye know that... Know where the garage is? Ideal Motors or- no...

Unknown: It was Ian Glass's, wasn't it?

JM: Yes. Jenkinson's.

Unknown: Yeah.

JL: Aye, near Ian Glass's but the farmhouse is still there and there's a little garage beside. So... Och, I... It's funny how ye forget everything.

Unknown: Yeah. So what did they grow there, Jim?

JL: Eh?

Unknown: What did they grow there? At Hawthornbank?

JL: Up where all these houses are, that was agricultural fields, and as a say we lived out at Gladshot and I got the sole bike, my dad got... And there was a chap from Glasgow there. I went into the shed to get my bike this night and no bike there. [?] wi these slippery tricks and hide your bike and things, and ma dad took the number of the bike, which is stamped on the frame and afterward the bike was found in Glasgow.

JM: Wow.

JL: [*laughter*]. Ye'd never think that was possible but it was and... I got the bike back. And then when I was working at the farm down- or several fields down, they had cows so we got the milk there. And when a learned to ride a bike my dad said to me- now, when ye had the pitcher, ye know what a pitcher is?

0h 12m 08s

JM: Yeah.

JL: Hanging on the handle bars and he says 'what are ye gonna do when ye go down that road?' cause the pitcher was hanging down low, what happened is I hit it with my knee and it came flying off. And, eh...

Unknown: So did ye used to go and collect milk?

JL: Eh?

Unknown: Did ye used to go and collect milk?

JL: Uhuh. But I'd be older, that's on the Pencaitland Road.

JM: It's quite a distance, isn't it? From one farm to the other. It's just as well ye had a bike.

JL: Well, ye could walk through the fields if ye wanted but I would rather go on the bike of course.

JM: Yes [*laughter*]. Yeah, it's a long walk.

JL: Ye got what they called the cream milk, and what was left was what they called skim milk. It was- the cream was taken off the first lot, ye see. And these, eh, they were five brothers- no, there were four brothers and two daughters in that family, and they were kinda sportsmen, ken. We used to go down there in the summertime and race round the fields and throw the hammer or the brick, ye know what I'm meaning? So, that was part of the life then but as I say, when I got the bike stolen we got it back - I could hardly believe it. And then I got a- I think I'm telling you this twice, I got a- a went to the school and the teacher went mad wi me for, as I said I only had the- I'm the only boy who got a prize.

0h 14m 16s

JM: She'd be disappointed to lose ye.

JL: Eh?

JM: She'd be disappointed to lose you, when ye left. She'd want ye to stay on.

JL: No, I always liked to be working.

JM: Uhuh?

JL: And that's why I left the school but...

Unknown: Well, ye said yer mother had a hard time at the house.

JL: Oh, aye.

Unknown: What sort of stuff did she do at the house?

JL: Well, I was the oldest of eight, and Mother would get up in the morning and she spent about an hour cleaning this fireplace and polishing it and ye'd no hot water in the house, ye only had cold water. And if ye wanted hot water for washing in the kitchen, there was a boiler that ye had to light a fire and that as well tae heat the water up. It was very much a thing... We had a bath then, but I think ye had tae get hot water from another, was it, place to have a bath.

JM: And did you have jobs that you had to do in the house?

JL: Eh?

JM: Did you have jobs that you had to do at home?

JL: Oh, yes.

JM: Yeah, what were they?

JL: My main job at home was providing logs for the fire in the house. And I was always away cutting down trees or branches that were lying about and actually, the people that live in there now does the same thing. And eh... Och.

Gladshot Farm – 0h 16m 14s

Unknown: Is that at Gladshot, Jim, you're talking about?

JL: Aye, but I loved living there because it was so- you were on yer own and on a Saturday night, occasionally, ma dad and a chap called Tom Ramsay, they lived down near the Letham Holdings, and he was a rabbit trapper and that, and Bob Grimond up the road from...the old, byway, at Pencaitland... No, that was [?]?

Unknown: Yeah.

JL: That road, there's a house in there and they used to have shootings up there, and ye got a bottle of juice that day and a pie, that kept ye going all day. But that's not what I was gonna tell ye.

Unknown: Ye were on about Gladshot, weren't ye? Ye moved to Gladshot? Did they not build a house for yer...?

JL: Well, at the house there, the house was far too small for our family and they built a new house for us and I remember... They had it picked for lime, this lime it had tae be in there for so long, and

one day there was a guy came in and had a dog wi him, and the dog plunged in and the man was [lime stuff in there]

0h 18m 30s

Unknown: So that'd be quite a while ago.

JL: Eh?

Unknown: That'd be quite a while ago.

JL: Oh, well, when I went tae- from Gifford way, I'd be about ten years old then.

Unknown: Aye.

JL: So in the house we were- we had our dinner in the middle of the day. And there was a chap come from Haddington, he was the insurance agent, and he just seems to open the door and walk in, ye see. And had a good gape round about, so. My dad had a dog as well so he says, I'll stop that guy from coming and walking in here. So he shut the inside door or something and left the front door open and left the dog in there. So he got a real fright when he...

JM: He would.

JL: He says 'you should have that dog tied up!' He says, 'It's [for] the likes o you people that just walk in and gape around the house' and something like that anyway. And then... I used to work all the time if I could. I loved doing something. As I say my mum had to do- clean all this fireside in the morning and how she ever did it, I don't know.

0h 20m 18s

Unknown: Cause there was a few people to look after.

JL: Eh?

Unknown: There was eight of you to look after.

JL: Uhuh.

JM: Yeah.

Unknown: So ten in the house altogether. Was that normally in a two bedroomed cottage or-?

JL: It was two bedrooms and ma mum and dad, of course, they just lived in the kitchen. It was kitchen cum sitting room again.

Unknown: So was it four in each room?

JL: Eh?

Unknown: Was it four in each room? Four kids in each room?

JL: Aye, well we'd be... I think they would be.

Unknown: Aye.

JL: I can't remember it but aye. I think there was a well in the courtyard place, and ma mum used to hate us going in there because we used to throw stones in and it was a wee while before they hit the bottom. I think the man that's in it now, he dug it all up and got a nice place. There was the house,

and then the stable, then the hay shed, and this well. Next tae the place was a tool shed I think and another one where we kept, eh... the grain, up the field from that. And in the corner, my dad always kept the pigs there. And ye get a chap from the Spittalrig, he'd come across and kill the pig and then cure it all and ye always had hams hanging up in the ceiling. And my dad always says that if he didnae get ham for his tea at night he woulnae be very pleased [*laughter*].

Childhood – 0h 22m 32s

Unknown: So what else did ye get to eat in those days, Jim? There wouldn't be much food around then.

JL: No, ye just got bread and ma mum would spread it wi margarine, no butter then, then put some jam on it, then scrape it off again [*laughter*]. And ye remember getting a wee bit cheese or something wi your tea, but she kept hens as well, so ye always get an egg now and again. But you were happy and ye didnae know any better then.

JM: Yeah. And what about- what sorts of things- games, do you ever remember any games that ye used to play with yer brothers and sisters?

JL: What's that?

Unknown: When you were younger, and playing games as kids wi yer brothers and sisters, what sort of games did ye play?

JL: Oh, climbing up in the hay shed and...

Unknown: All the dangerous things?

JL: Aye, the dangerous things.

Unknown: Did ye just play around the farm then? Chasing each other, or what sort of games?

JL: Oh, aye, all sorts of things. The farmer- now, there were two brothers had that farm, at Hawthornbank at Haddington, and they had an old [tourer?] type car. And when Willy Jenkinson came on the scene, he just ran it roond and parked it in a little, slight slope, slight... slope there. So we used tae watch and when Willy Jenkinson- or the other one, Jim Jenkinson, went doon the fields and checking the crops and that, we used tae push the car out ontae the main road, well it's a side road right there. And we'd all get in and I used tae steer it roond into the yard again. And then we all got out again and pushed it back oot and, yeah, that was a great thing.

0h 24m 53s

Unknown: I take it you were all kids doing that, Jim?

JL: Eh?

Unknown: You were all kids doing that?

JL: Well, a was the oldest.

Unknown: Uhuh?

JL: I was aboot ten then, I think.

Unknown: Oh, I see [*laughter*].

JL: I got a job wi the cooperative and a went for a meeting one night, and they had a meeting every Thursday night so... So I was, eh, I went to apply for the job, I went and there were three of us picked tae see if we wanted the job or not. So on the Saturday morning, the postman didnae come till about eleven o'clock or so, and eh ma mum says 'God!' she says, 'ye've to be in Haddington for half-past eleven to see about the job!' And a was in bed wi the flu. So a just had to get up and a cycled intae Haddington. Sweat was pouring off me. So a got in and they asked me to do a few sums and things like that, and he says 'well, dae ye want the job or not?' 'Oh yes', a says, 'I'm keen to have a job' and a got the job and worked wi a van. It went round the town every day: bread, footwear, parcels o laundry, you name it we delivered it or picked it up. The batteries for the old wireless, ye know? Do ye not remember them?

Delivery Job – 0h 26m 56s

JM: I know what ye mean, yes.

JL: Aye.

JM: So were you like a delivery driver?

JL: Aye. So I had to take- a did that job for about a year. On the Sunday morning ye got up at the same time, aboot six o'clock, and went to Haddington, we stayed out near Pencaitland, because we had to deliver milk on a Sunday.

JM: Mmhm?

JL: Which is no the best thing to do, cause ye- ye'd be up some of these stairs on the High Street and ye would drop a bottle on them and the glass went all over the place. Ye couldn't... The battery in there [?] and yer hand hurts, it would flare up and pass away. So...

Unknown: Was that with a horse and cart ye were going round Haddington?

JL: Aye. It was like a van-

Unknown: Ah, yeah.

JL: -a horse van.

Unknown: Horse van.

JL: And then on the Sunday morning, we used to come back intae the yard and we got tae- there was a place outside where all the empty lemonade bottles were stacked, and biscuit boxes. So we used to- we went through all of them to see if there was any lemonade or whatever left in any of the bottles. And the same wi the biscuit boxes. Ye were lucky to get a handful o broken biscuits, aye. And that was just Sunday.

The Haddington Co-op – 0h 28m 32s

JM: And who did you work for? Was that working for the Co-op?

JL: Uhuh.

JM: Yeah.

JL: At that time it was Haddington Co-op.

JM: And did people have their Co-op books to get their stamps?

JL: Uhuh.

JM: So did they get it actually stamped? I remember my granny used to have a book.

JL: There was a- maybe eight slips in the book, and ye put whatever business was yours, whether it was a- ye had a number, and yer either a butcher, baker or whatever, and ye wrote that in there.

JM: Right.

JL: And then ye added- ye could pay money in the book as well, so ye either added on money, or took it off if they paid towards their bills. It was a funny thing sometimes but...

JM: Yeah, I never understood how it worked [*laughter*].

JL: No. Well, eh... Well, every step on the- you had a number and the date and... Och, I cannae explain it.

JM: No?

Unknown: So was this like a log?

JM: Oopsie daisy.

Unknown: Was this like a log of people's accounts, Jim?

JL: Eh?

0h 30m 00s

Unknown: Was the Co-op- was it like a log book of people's accounts?

JL: Aye. Aye.

Unknown: Cause some people used to owe ye money, didn't they? And ye had to- they'd mebbe get some groceries and they couldn't afford to pay them, so they were in debt and...?

JL: Well, if they were- got in debt they had to cancel their co-operation I think.

Unknown: Yeah.

JM: Oh, right. And then did you train as a butcher?

JL: Well, ye worked on this van, and delivered and picked up everything. Then, if they needed a butcher or a baker or a... Grocery worker, ye got that job- well, ye didnae actually get the job but ye had to apply for it and make sure that ye do what they wanted ye to do.

Unknown: So you applied for the butcher's job? Or the butcher's job came up?

JL: Yes.

Unknown: You were still quite young then? What age were ye?

JL: The butcher's shop in that time, was on [?] Street, and there was a block of shops- naw, they were built later on. They were- the old ones were pulled down and eh, what was I going to say?

Unknown: We were talking about you starting as a butcher. So, what age were you when you started to get a job wi the butcher's?

JL: I'd be about sixteen, I think. Aye, I'd be about sixteen then.

Working in the Butcher's Shop – 0h 32m 02s

Unknown: Did you do your apprenticeship?

JL: Uhuh. Aye... Ye went on and then if ye were any use at all, ye were put on a van then. That was the best job of all. I liked that.

JM: Yeah?

JL: Cause you're your own boss, ye know? Ye worked hard but in later years ye got a bonus if ye depending on how much ye sold. So a finished up wi quite a good bonus and that was a big help.

Unknown: So that was in the butcher's van, wasn't it? Delivering?

JL: Uhuh.

Unknown: Around Haddington, or how far did ye get away delivering meat?

JL: I went out to Letham Holdings and roond that way, down tae that big house on the right.

Unknown: Clerkington?

JL: But there was a farm up there as well ye see, at that time and... There was a Mrs Ellis lived up there, and the houses now I think are getting extended.

Unknown: Aye.

JL: Where I reversed in there, this Mrs Ellis she just came and opened the window ye see, so I always had a bone for this dog. And I went one day and next time I went back she says 'ye know, ye killed ma dog'. 'Me? I never killed yer dog'. 'Yes', she says, 'ye did, because it must've run alongside the van and ye must've killed it' [*laughter*]. I think that's the story, ye know.

National Service/ World War Two – 0h 34m 22s

Unknown: Uhuh.

JM: Yeah.

Unknown: So you were called up for national service, as well?

JL: Uhuh. Yes, I was called up on the 2nd of January 1940, and we lived at Alderston Mains at that time. The snow was about that height and I had tae walk through this snow down tae the station at Haddington and there was a chap called, eh, Alec Wood. He lived just near the station, ye see. So we got on the train intae Edinburgh and there was young chaps from all round Leith, and all that area ken. And we get on the train and we went down south, back and forward across the countryside, picking other people up, ye see. We got tae Mansfield aboot- late at night, we were marched, in a fashion anyway, down to what they called the Pally, it's a dance hall thing, ye know. So we got a meal there, can you imagine eating sago pudding at two o'clock in the morning?

0h 36m 08s

JM: No.

JL: [*laughter*] And that's what happened. And there was a chap called Jimmy Jones, he came from Bonnyrig and he says 'boys, - used rough words -...' he says, 'I'm not being here long' and Jimmy Jones reported sick every two weeks, because he had something was wrong wi his back, and they

cannae prove it if you're kidding them on, it seems so it took him about three years to get out [laughter]. Aye, [they got up to some tricks, I'll] tell ye.

JM: But you travelled to- was it to Italy first? Or to North Africa?

JL: I cannae...

Unknown: When ye first started in the army, ye were posted to North Africa?

JL: No, no.

Unknown: Was it no?

JL: We were down southwest England just training to drive vehicles and all that, and then we were there for about three years before we went tae Algeria.

JM: Right.

JL: But while I was talking about that, there was a guy called... Oh, can't remember... He was taking us out in trucks tae learn to drive, ye see, and we were happy in the back and standing in freezing cold weather and, eh, ye got a wee shot of driving ye see and... Starting of course, the first thing I did is I stalled it... So because, eh... And then two or three times I tried it on anyway, and he says 'get out!' he says. 'You can drive alright', he says, 'yer just kidding on ye cannae' [laughter]. So I never was out training again. But they...

0h 38m 28s

Unknown: So going to Algiers that must've been your first time abroad?

JL: Eh...

Unknown: How did you find-

JL: Well, we left, eh... Birkenhead, I think it was. And it was a really rough weather, it was the middle of winter. And they got into the Bay of Biscay, and good god it was awful... And I forget how many troops were in this troop ship and we were sleeping in hammocks ye ken and that, and on the floor and it being so rough and some of them were sick. Oh, it was...

JM: It'd be horrible.

JL: A went outside and lay down outside and held on tae the- one of the things, metal things, outside the ship and it was freezing cold but ye felt better that way. And then we got to- when ye got to... What's that? When ye get into... The Mediterranean.

Unknown: Mediterranean.

JL: Ye know, near Gibraltar?

North Africa during the War – 0h 40m 00s

Unknown: Yeah.

Unknown: Some straights or something.

JL: Anyway, it was like night and day ken, it was so hot... And that was the first time, I know... So we landed at Algiers then and we were then unloading goods off the ship, battleships, ye know, and taking them up tae- one place we went tae was a football ground and they made the bread over

there and we took it up and stacked it up on the stand. And that's what ye got, bread and... We were there a while, anyway. So I was away into the Sahara Desert, cause they had prisoners there, away out in the desert cutting down trees, ye see.

JM: Right.

JL: And we went out and brought them back and these- that, sort of things like that.

JM: How did ye cope with the heat?

JL: Oh well...

JM: You must have found that really strange.

JL: That was the first thing ye learned. Ye couldnae get water, but what ye did was ye took yer clothes off one by one and hang them up on a rope and in five minutes they were dry. And then when we moved up tae a place called Bone, B-O-N-E, and there was a lot of the natives working there and loading ships and that. And all of a sudden, we seen all the natives diving under trucks and all that, and then we heard *ratatata*. This is when German... 'Dive down!' they said. And we just stood rooted to the ground, we didn't know anywhere, but ye soon learned a tell ye.

0h 42m 45s

JM: Yeah.

JL: And then a went tae... Oh, up the North African coast, all the way up ... different places.

Unknown: Was yer main job- ye were in logistics, weren't ye? Delivering goods. Ye were driving most of the time?

JL: Aye. Aye, the... Ye went away about five o'clock at night I think, wi a German diesel truck ye know, roasting in the front and ye picked up the mail, and ye took it tae, oh I don't- no, that was early in the morning, aboot five o'clock or so. Ye took the mail up tae a- I think it was Constantine or something, and ye unloaded the mail and then in the morning there was a repeat thing. By god it was hot, I tell ye. And, eh, eventually...

0h 44m 00s

Ye see the- all the local lads and that straight all the way up the road, holding up eggs in a box- ['earth'?] they called them. And this boy was, eh, 'Ok son! Here ye are, get the money oot, get the eggs!' I took the eggs ye see, and then he wound the window up and drove off. About half an hour after, I had to stop for some reason, and here's the wee boy's hanging out the side of the truck. He wanted his money [*laughter*]. Aye, there was some funny things happened, a tell ye. The Americans were the worst. They- if the Germans were retreating, as we called it, down the road towards Algiers, they would run back as well.

JM: Did they?

JL: Poor soldiers were the Americans. It was only the great amount of power they had, eh... Guns and trucks and that, ye see. And then we... We went tae- when we- went all the way up to Tunis, then we came back down when all the Germans had been cleared out tae Sicily and that.

0h 46m 06s

I remember Taranto in North Africa. They had this... Och, jeez... It was some sort of camp or something and ye went in there and ye got- it was a- all the troops got a meal in there. And then when they came out, they had a big- what do ye call them? Oil drum, outside and any food you had, you just tipped it in there. And the Italians, they were fighting the kids to get into this grub, and so they did sometimes and what ye weren't eating yourself, that all went home. It's the way, ye wouldnae believe what happened there.

JM: Yeah. Did you get to come home from- on leave?

JL: Yes. I think it was twice. Ye came by train.

JM: Right.

JL: It was a long journey. And every... Everywhere... It took you about two days, I think it was, to come on leave. It was another time, we'd been in North Africa quite a while, and somewhere or other- I don't know where we were going, I cannae remember now, but tae get- to come- the train stopped, ye see.

0h 48m 05s

And there was a water tank there for filling up water on the thingy, and they didnae have coal it was all firewood they had then. So this chap, Steel, 'aw', he says, 'I'm gonna have a shower', so he washed his clothes and there was terrible dust and that about. So, after this shower his hair was all black and his body was all black. There were funny things happened as well. And eh... Cannae remember. Oh, there was...

Unknown: So you've experienced quite a lot in your life?

JL: Oh, aye. I could sit here and if I could remember I could sit all day and I could tell ye things.

JM: But you've remembered lots of things to tell us just now. And that's really- that's super, thank you very much.

JL: Pardon?

JM: Would ye like to just stop now? Yes?

JL: Aye, if ye want.

JM: Oh no I'm happy to listen to ye [*laughter*]. But I don't want you to be tired.

JL: Well, I'll tell you this story. Eh, you've heard of Mount Cassino? In Italy? It's built on a high rock.

JM: Right.

JL: A very religious place. And there were- they were holding up British troops from advancing, ye see. So, for five days, I was on transport.

0h 50m 04s

Ye had Indians- well, Africans rather, they were loading their big shells onto the trucks, about that length, and ye got loaded up wi that, and ye built a wee dam on a wee stream like, had a wash, and then away back up the road wi ye. Everything was blasted useless, every tree, every bush, it was all smashed to bits. The roads were, oh, terrible. So, we got to try to take Monte Cassino but they couldn't... The Germans had the advantage there, ye see, and... Och, cannae remember. Anyway, they couldnae take the Monte Cassino.

Unknown: Yeah.

JM: And were you in Italy at the end of the war? Or when the Italians surrendered were you in Italy?

JL: Pardon?

Unknown: Were you in Italy when the war ended?

JL: Yes, I was.

JM: Can you remember anything about it?

JL: Well, that time I had promotion, they were wanting to stay on and be made a sergeant, a says 'no way'.

The End of the War/ Italy – 0h 52m 04s

A says 'I've had enough of that'. But I was in Italy for about six months after the war so, because what we did then was we helped the Italians to get settled in again because they had nothing, for a tube of toothpaste, it was anything ye wanted. That's how difficult it was.

Unknown: Can he remember when the war was finished?

Unknown: John's asking if you can remember when the cease fire was declared? Can you remember being told that the war was finished?

JL: Aye, I'd be in Italy. I cannae really... I cannae remember whether I took particular note o that.

Unknown: Cause it must have been a big day for a lot of soldiers, to find out the war was over?

JL: Oh, aye. Yes, it was.

JM: And was it a long time before you came back to Haddington? A long time after the end of the war, before you got to come back?

JL: What's she saying?

Unknown: How long was it before ye came back to Haddington? After the war finished.

JL: It was about a year.

Unknown: Uhuh?

JL: Aye, because as I say, ye had tae- yer trying to get the Italians settled back into place, ye see.

Unknown: What sorts of things were ye doing to help them to get settled back in?

JL: We transported a lot of stuff and that, cause the Germans took aw their transport away so. [The separatists?] were the worst people. They came when we were living in a, like a big farmhouse ye ken and they came across in the- the people that lived in the house further up the way, they kept animals and that and, eh, the [separatists?] came over one night, trying to steal a pig. So they could cut it up and... But they didnae get away with it.

0h 54m 34s

Unknown: I suppose they'd be hungry, as well. They'd be looking for food as well.

JL: They were, aye. Everybody was the same – aw, we didnae- we didnae starve right enough. Sometimes if there was an attack on, ye wouldnae get anything hardly. Mostly corned beef and... The Americans were desperate to get corned beef from us in exchange for... Oh, a cannae mind what the name was.

Unknown: Spam?

JL: It was the different stuff, ye know. And, eh... Oh, we had some great things. We were in this place in the- we had a- there was a little stream doon- a sort of river end ye know. And we got a petrol can and made little wheels, ye see, and went up and- wi a rope, and held a bucket of water up and then you were ready to go underneath and ye would get a shower that way [*laughter*]. Oh there was some funny things happened, I'll tell ye.

After the War – 0h 56m 14s

JM: Can ye tell us about coming back to Haddington after the war? Cause was the town quite different?

JL: After the war?

JM: When ye came back to Haddington-

JL: No, after the war I was at, eh... Wallyford. Ye know Wallyford?

JM: Yeah.

JL: Well, there was a house stood back up at the top of a hill and in my [*drive?*], everyday there was a draft whistling through and I came home and there was a big tree down on one of the wheels. So I had a big... Big saw, wi two handles on it, ye see. And I took this saw down and I used to saw the big logs off, chop them off and... Cause the house was that cold that I was freezing when I was there.

Unknown: Did ye notice a difference, when ye were away for a few years, did ye notice a difference when ye came back?

JL: Oh, aye. Ye see, a lot of things happened.

Unknown: So did you go straight back to being a butcher again?

JL: When a came back, eh, the head butcher says 'ye'll be going back tae Dunbar to take over the shop there', 'oh', I says then, 'how do I get down there?' He says 'well, ye'll just have to provide your own transport', I says 'I don't think so'. So I went and saw ma boss in Haddington and I explained to him what was happening, he says, eh, 'come down here tomorrow and start in the morning'. So I never went to Dunbar [*laughter*]. It was a long way to travel.

0h 58m 40s

JM: Yeah.

Unknown: Did ye have a car in those days? Did ye have a car?

JL: No, but I bought a motorbike.

Unknown: Uhuh?

JL: I bought this motorbike in Edinburgh – CWS916.

Unknown: Ok, yeah.

JL: And I think it was Dave and me, went away to see about this bike this night. And we were going through Musselburgh and they had tram tracks through Musselburgh at that time. And we were- ye know that big- used to be a big garage at the top of [?] in the corner?

Unknown: Mm, not sure Jim. At Fisherrow?

JL: Anyway, there was a tram stop there. So me and Dave, I think it was, on the back of the bike and the tram stopped of course and you had to give way. For the passengers to get on and off.

01h 00m 00s

So, this person stepped onto the tram, then changed their mind and walked back across and of course I could do nothing else, I just braked as fast as I could. But we went flying over the handlebars and I got up and a says- I won't use the words that I scolded her with but I says 'are ye no looking where yer going?' And she just looked at me and buzzed off [*laughter*]. We landed on the pavement and... Lots of things have happened.

JM: Yeah.

Unknown: So there'd be a lot less traffic in those days? There'd be a lot less traffic in those days?

JL: Oh, nothing like what it is now. No. The traffic ran from Edinburgh, through Portobello, right down tae that corner, the roundabout at Wallyford. But that wasnae there that time.

Unknown: Aye.

JL: They went, ken, up the old road. And then it went all the way up to the holiday camp there.

Unknown: At Port Seton?

JL: Aye.

JM: Was that the trams? Yeah?

JL: Eh?

JM: Would the trams go out there?

JL: Yeah.

JM: Yes, ah.

JL: All the trams were always busy.

JM: I think we'll mebbe, we'll mebbe stop there, if you're ok with that? Cause I feel we've been talking for quite a long time and...

01h 02m 08s

JL: Say again?

Unknown: You've been chatting for a while, do ye wanna stop? Ye happy with that?

JL: Aye, I think so.

JM: Yes? Thank you very much.

JL: I'm sorry I cannae hear what yer saying to me.

JM: [*laughter*]. That's ok.

Unknown: Yeah.

JM: I'll switch this off now.