

Interviewee(s): John Hamilton (JH)	Interviewer(s): Janis Macdonald (JM)
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TITLE	<i>Janis Macdonald interviews John Hamilton.</i>
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SUMMARY	<i>Janis Macdonald interviews John Hamilton</i>

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Background – 0h 00m 00s

JM: And this is Janis Macdonald at [REDACTED], and I'm here today with John Hamilton. John, if you wouldn't mind just introducing yourself and saying a little bit about who you are, and perhaps any family in the area.

JH: Ok. John Hamilton, I don't have a middle name because my parents didn't think to give me a middle name which I've never forgiven them for [*laughter*]. Born 25th September 1964- I would've been- my only fly in the ointment for not being truly Haddington is the Vert Maternity Hospital was shut for some maintenance work at the two weeks that I was born, so I was born up in Edinburgh. So apart from that, came back tae live with my parents and grandparents at 1 Lydgait. I believe I was only there for a year if not two and then my parents got a council house round on [REDACTED] and I spent all my childhood in [REDACTED]. Parents are still there to this day. I started work when I was still fifteen, that's my claim to fame at work. I'm probably the longest serving youngest person at my work. Cause my birthday's September and the apprentice intake at Ferranti in Edinburgh was August the 11th. I had about a month and a half while my parents still got family allowance, so there's not many people that can claim that. Em, is that ok for the-?

JM: Yes, that's absolutely fine, thank you, yes. So you would be quite close to your grandparents when you were a child, obviously, being in the same house, but you won't remember that being so young?

JH: No, I can't remember that.

JM: But as you grew up did you stay very close and see a lot of them?

0h 02m 00s

JH: It's not striking me as being a particularly strong relationship, not for the wrong reasons. Just what I can remember because my mother's parents lived in Haddington and my dad's parents lived in Gilchriston Farm near Humbie, I obviously didn't see them as often. So, logically I saw more of my parents- rather, my mother's parents. What I can remember, I used to help my gran with the Saturday weekly shop.

JM: Right.

JH: I used to get some pocket money for that.

JM: What sort of form did that take? Because of course it's not like Tesco's nowadays where you-

JH: [?].

JM: -you go in and help yourself, so what- can you remember a routine?

JH: The Co-op was there and I think she used to go to- was it Cunningham's had a little grocer's shop on the High Street? The Cunningham- Cummings... You mentioned the name earlier.

JM: Bob Cummings.

JH: Cummings. He had his own grocer's shop, if memory serves me right.

JM: It was called... Hay's-

JH: Hay's.

JM: Hay's Cash Stores.

JH: In the High Street?

JM: Yes.

JH: We used to go up there, the Co-op and then the newsagent's as well. I can remember that and it was the days of the wicker basket, not the plastic bags. So, I used to help my gran and I would've been in secondary school then, cause I remember- what I can remember is desperately how do I get out of this because I'm getting too old for this.

JM: Well, I was just thinking a secondary school boy going out... Yes.

JH: I remember thinking how do I get out of this and I think it just naturally dwindled away.

JM: Right.

JH: Can't remember if there was anything happened that stopped it, ye know, like illness or that. So, and what I can also remember with my grandparents, when we got back to the house my grandfather would have made a cooked breakfast for us and I can still remember that to this day.

And I can remember the big black frying pan they used to cook the sausages on. And the sausages back in those days, ye did ask, the skins were quite crispy.

Grandparents – 0h 04m 18s

JM: Uhuh?

JH: Because nowadays if ye pierce a sausage, it spurts and back then it was a crispy- I don't know what, it was the skins they used, and I can always remember going back, sitting, I used to sit in the corner of their kitchen table because I was small enough to fit in the corner, and I can always remember these sausages. That was my lasting memory. So, that was really all I can remember about my mother's parents.

JM: And was that every Saturday? Was that a Saturday routine?

JH: That was ma Saturday routine. To be honest, that's all I can really remember about ma mother's parents.

JM: Mmhm?

JH: I can remember being in the house and I used to have another cupboard with toys, and it had a metal- what would have been the equivalent of the Tonka trucks, which these days are made of plastic but it was like a metal thing. And I wish I'd kept it, would have been a great wee souvenir for my childhood memories with my grandparents. I can remember taking the toys out the- it was the cupboard in the kitchen they kept it in, down the bottom of it for some reason. I can remember that as well. And my grandfather was a great gardener, just out and about while he's working in the garden. That's all I can really remember about my grandparents.

JM: So did he grow- was he a vegetable gardener or a flower gardener?

JH: Back then ye did do vegetables.

JM: Vegetables.

JH: Well, ye had your vegetable plot, which was up the side of the house, ye know the layout, they were 1 Lydgait but they built an extra extension because it was a corner house.

JM: Yes.

JH: So, that was the vegetable plot up the side of the house and yer front lawn had the flowers round it.

JM: The flower beds.

JH: So ye had these two distinct areas of yer garden, whereas now it's typically all ornamental. I mean-

0h 06m 02s

JM: Yes.

JH: -how many people do ye know that actually grow tatties and...

JM: And he didn't have an allotment or anything, did he?

JH: Naw, nah. Not that I'm aware of.

JM: Cause I remember- was he the gardener of Knox Academy?

JH: Yes, aye.

JM: Right, and that must've been a huge responsibility really, to take care of- I don't know, would they be vegetables or-?

JH: Oh, remember at Knox ye had the triangle? Ye remember that? There was an enclosed area, it was enclosed by the assembly hall, ye had a corridor leading to what was the old building-

JM: Yes.

JH: -and as ye walked through the main- as ye walked through, ye had the main hall, which bound one side of this triangle, ye had the corridor that took ye up to the old building, as we called it. That bound the third area. If you came down the main assembly hall that would eventually take ye out to- what was it? The building that used to stand there.

JM: Yes, by the Home Economics department.

JH: Yeah. So, there was... Like a pyramid, can you remember it? Like a pyramid.

JM: I do, actually. A pyramid greenhouse. In the middle there.

JH: A pyramid greenhouse, and that was his home.

JM: Had a pond.

JH: Yes, there was a pond there as well.

JM: Yes.

JH: That was- I can only recollect my grandfather really spending time in and around there.

JM: Right.

JH: I don't think he would have cut the grass, which would have been a huge task.

JM: No, I wasn't thinking of the grass, but I was-

JH: Would've been a huge task.

JM: But I was just wondering if they had sort of garden ground for vegetables and things.

JH: I can't remember that.

JM: No.

JH: I can just remember he worked at the school. But back then, that was his job he... Now, we know that was just probably something to keep him busy, a part-time job.

JM: Yeah.

JH: But back then, cause he was- when I was at school... He would have been a hundred now, because I think he was born in 1899, so he'd be, oh, in fact about 120. So, if that was- I'm fifty-four the now, so I remember, em, forty years ago, sixty-four, so that would have been a retirement job in today's money.

0h 08m 18s

JM: I suppose, but I wonder if people really retired in the same way-

JH: Yeah.

JM: -that we think people do now.

JH: Yeah, I need to ask ma mother that, why would he take that job?

JM: Yes.

JH: My mother's still very with it.

JM: Oh, because he used to cycle as well, didn't he? Right- all the time.

JH: Yes, and I can remember his bike. His bike had the solid brake levers on it, the brake levers that were solid down to the brake pads.

JM: Right.

JH: Nowadays, ye've got the cable operated brake pads.

JM: Ok.

JH: They were solid.

JM: I'm not sure what you mean but...

JH: When you're on a push bike yer levers go into a cable with an inner cord.

JM: Yes?

JH: It then takes you down to the caliper.

JM: Uhuh?

JH: Whereas my grandfather's bike which was- they were all black, any colour ye want as long as it's black. The levers had solid extensions to a little pivot that then was a solid extension down to the caliper.

JM: Oh, yes I see what you mean.

JH: So it was...

JM: Kind of like a T shape.

JH: Yeah, but there were-

JM: With a bit at the bottom.

JH: It was solid rather than an inner or an outer cable-

JM: Uhuh?

JH: -routed through the bike frame.

JM: What an interesting thing to remember.

JH: Yeah, I don't know why I remember that. I do like my bikes, and mebbe that's how my interest in bikes started.

JM: Yeah.

JH: It's just through my grandfather's one, because he always cycled. They never had a car. Eh, I can always remember that. That's something they'd never done.

JM: So, did they go on holiday much? Do you remember?

JH: Well, my grandmother was from Ireland, from [Birr?], which is outside Dublin and they used to go over to visit her relatives in Dublin, I can remember that. And I can only- I remember that because one or both of them took ill when they were over there and my mother had to fly over. It wasn't just a cut finger, I'm not- I've got a fever...

0h 10m 10s

JM: Yeah?

JH: I don't remember the details. So, yes, they used to go over to Dublin. How frequently? Pass. But I can remember them heading over to Dublin. But I'm assuming somebody's taken them to the airport. I think they also went via ferry, my mother once said. It was a long journey.

JM: Did your mother make the journey at some point, as well?

JH: My mother?

JM: She would've as a child?

JH: She... I'm sure she did. If I'd known I could have asked her and given you a better answer, but...

JM: That's ok.

JH: Em, I'm sure she did. I'm sure she's given me recollections of her going over as a youngster but as I say she had to go over when one or both of them- they took ill on separate occasions. She had to go over just to see how things were.

JM: Yeah. And when you moved to [REDACTED]-

JH: I can't remember that at all.

JM: Well, no, if you're only one you can't remember that. But thinking about, you know, it's quite a busy area with houses, although there wouldn't be the same cars.

JH: Yeah, huge difference in cars.

JM: What are your earliest recollections of [REDACTED], and neighbours or family round about? Did you have close family?

JH: When I was- yeah. My mother had two living brothers. She'd lost a brother, I think it was tuberculosis I think, when he was about fourteen. Em, lost a brother, so there was two living brothers who, literally as the crow flies, were a hundred yards either [side], you could have formed a triangle. A hundred yards triangle.

Early Memories/ Family – 0h 12m 05s

JM: Right.

JH: So my recollection as a child in [REDACTED] was playing with my cousins and I can't remember playing with anybody else.

JM: Just your cousins?

JH: I can- no doubt there were others there but I- just my cousins, because my neighbours were all older. I had neighbours either side of my parents' house, they were all older. Or girls. Of course ye didn't- girls didn't play then. Across the road again, in the other direction, they were younger so ye know... Two years when yer a child is a big difference between development and what ye want tae play with. So I can only remember playing with my cousins, which is odd.

JM: And can you remember any activities or the games or any roleplay type?

JH: We did do a roleplay, now that you come to mention it. It was magazine... I think it was *Warlord*. I don't know if that exists now. Em, *Warlord*, and of course it was all based around war, and some of the activities that the magazine had ye doing was how tae send secret messages. I can remember one technique was to squeeze a lemon, and allegedly ye wrote with the lemon and I think if ye put a hot iron on it or something like that-

JM: Yeah.

JH: -if I remember correctly, it allegedly came alive. Total tosh as ye would say [*laughter*]. But I can remember sending coded messages to ma cousins and going 'what's this?' And then... One lasting memory was my- one of my uncles, my uncle Jimmy Crowe, he's still with us... My other uncle's now- aunt and uncle and auntie are both passed. The Crowes, Crowes, with an E. My uncle Jimmy worked at Cockenzie Power Station.

Uncle Jimmy – 0h 14m 10s

JM: Mmhm?

JH: And if ye knew Cockenzie, the colour scheme for Cockenzie was a sort of green and red, if ye...

JM: I'm not familiar.

JH: This is detail that I can remember. It was green and red. And my uncle I think used to borrow a lot of hardware and even had welding equipment-

JM: Right.

JH: -that he would borrow from the factory- from the power station. And he used tae help ma cousin Jimmy, who was also a Jimmy, make go-carts out of like cement mixer engines. And I used to loved going round the back of their house, they had the welding bottles making this little go-cart with a cement mixer engine on it and it was painted in the Cockenzie green and red.

JM: What a fabulous experience for a child.

JH: That's something that I'll take to the grave, as I say.

JM: Yeah.

JH: And then just to expand on that, my cousin Caroline, she... So my cousin Jimmy was sort of introduced to engines and then motorbikes. My cousin Caroline was introduced to horses. So this horsebox got made for her from metal borrowed from Cockenzie Power Station.

JM: [So that was a huge-?]

JH: Horsebox. And guess what colour it was? [*laughter*] it was the same colour as Cockenzie Power Station! I can still remember... So, I had fond memories of just getting ma hands dirty and-

JM: Yes.

JH: -on these gas bottles and...

JM: So did you actually get to do welding and things?

JH: Well...

JM: Under supervision?

JH: Under supervision, yeah, yeah.

JM: Yeah?

JH: I was just fascinated seeing how these things got together. I think to this day I still love to know how things work. Ye know, if you said that was broken I'd be in there trying to understand what was broken and-

0h 16m 08s

JM: Yeah.

JH: -or if I thought that's quite fascinating, how does that work? I'd be analysing it. I would... That must've sparked something inside me, that makes me so-

JM: So you credit your uncle with that?

JH: -so technical. I like to be technical.

JM: Uhuh?

JH: That's obviously sparked an interest that's still with me today, ye know.

JM: Yeah.

JH: So that's a fond memory. Another memory, not a good memory, but a- nothing serious, was I can remember because the River Tyne was just at the other side of Traprain Terrace, Riverside Drive... One memory I had was we must've made a float, ye know, old oil barrels with a couple of planks of wood roped together, and I can remember me and my cousin Jimmy on this boat, and I think I must've tried... I was getting a bit 'feared' as they call it, to use that word, feared and I tried to get back on the banking but I think ma cousin tried to embarrass me, make it awkward for me and I can't remember if he held onto me but he was pushing me so the boat was pushed back and I can still remember being quite frightened.

JM: Yeah.

JH: I had visions of the water, it was twenty feet deep and I probably would've went up-

JM: Did ye fall in?

JH: No, I never actually fell in but I can still remember that memory of playing on the River Tyne, on this manmade boat that no doubt was the same colour as Cockenzie Power Station. I can remember that memory as well. Yeah.

JM: But of course situations would be quite different as well, cause you would just go out to play for the day type thing, or did you kind of check in close to home or-?

0h 18m 05s

JH: We were within this hundred metre triangle.

JM: Right, ok. So, you were very close anyway?

JH: We were, and that's another memory... I actually recollected this memory a few years ago was... We mustn't have wandered. We must've kept within our scheme, as they call it.

JM: Yes.

JH: And I can't remember what triggered me into realising that, which was a few years ago now. But... That's what it was, that's what triggered it. It was the pictures of Haddington, you'll get like, you know the wee farm, Sprotlands Farm? That's, ye know on the bend at the end of Whittingehame Drive?

JM: Over at the golf course?

JH: Over at the golf course you've got, is it Amisfield Park? The houses are on that bend.

JM: Yes.

JH: And they actually look over the golf course. That was Sprotlands Farm.

JM: Mmhm.

JH: And I can remember posting Sprotlands Farm and the date was like 1980 or something like that, and I'm thinking to myself, 1980, I'd started work by then. I cannot remember that farm. And that's what made me- so, through my lost Haddington, that's what made me realise that I must never have wandered outside the boundary of our housing scheme.

JM: Yeah.

JH: Now ye can get kids who are on the other side of Haddington, and the parents are on the phone going-

JM: Yes, uhuh.

JH: -'where are ye?' I just- I can distinctly remember we just didn't wander.

JM: But you must've been able to find enough to do and had enough company that you were quite content there.

JH: Obviously it never bothered me, yeah.

JM: Yes. And what about your mum and dad? Do you have brothers and sisters?

JH: I've got two younger sisters. Angela's only about ten months younger than me.

JM: Right.

JH: And then Linda's... Is it three years younger than me? Three or four years younger.

0h 20m 01s

JM: Right. So were you close to your sisters or did you not want to have too much to do with them cause they were girls?

JH: I think it was... To be honest-

JM: And ye had your cousins.

JH: There was very little memory, so ye know... What I can remember is my youngest sister, I used to get quite annoyed at her, because she was a pain in the backside [*laughter*].

JM: Now remember it's recording [*laughter*].

JH: Yes [*laughter*]. Oh, but you're better telling it as it is, rather than-

JM: Oh, but don't say anything that you might regret!

JH: It's all trivial stuff in the grand scheme of things.

JM: Yeah.

JH: A couple of memories I remember- and me now- my younger sister and me are probably very close, compared to my middle sister. Not that there's any reason my middle sister's not as close as-

JM: It's often in families like that, though, isn't it?

JH: Well, there is another reason but I'm too emotional for that. Which I won't go into just now.

JH: My youngest sister, the memories I've got with her are... Back in those days, what I can remember in my parents' house, no central heating then. And ye would get ready for school and ye had the two, three bar electric fire that replaced the coal fire. We never had a coal fire at my parents' house, although the fireplace was there.

JM: Right.

JH: That's- we'll come back to my grandparents' coal fire, that was another memory. And I can remember the three of us would be huddled, a third, a third, a third of the two, three bar electric fire and my youngest sister was always the one... And when it came to sitting in the back of my father's car, you always wanted a window seat. Still remember, distinctly remember that. And it was always me and my youngest sister who would fight for the last window seat. To the extent ye used to be devious and pretend yer leaving the house to jump in the car and who goes in second gets the middle seat, so 'oh I've left something in the house' and you'd be the last and you'd end up... But that was just childhood nonsense.

0h 22m 24s

JM: I know, but it's quite funny to think back on it, isn't it?

JH: It was quite funny to think back about, yeah. Aye, that was that.

JM: Yeah.

JH: But now we're as strong as ever, ye know.

JM: And obviously no seatbelts or-

JH: Oh, no, nothing like that.

JM: No.

JH: I can remember the plastic seats and on a hot day you'd be, phew.

JM: Yes. So, moving on to going to school, cause you were- you started school in 1969. Can you remember, obviously, going to St Mary's? What are your early recollections of school? Did you wear a uniform for example? Or do ye not know?

JH: Pass.

JM: No?

JH: I can't remember.

JM: Were you taken to school? How...

JH: Can't... Well, we were never... In the early days, I can't remember like primary one, two, three, cause St Mary's had- primary one, two, three were off to the side of it. Did ye know the layout of St Mary's?

JM: Did you go to St Mary's school that was just a few years ago-demolished

JH: The one that was flattened a few years ago, yes.

JM: Ok.

JH: So that's the one that I went to. But primary one, two and three were sort of off, off to the side-

JM: They were round to the back?

JH: Yeah.

JM: Behind the hall? Yes.

JH: Behind the hall, yes.

JM: Yes.

JH: And then four, five, six and seven were in the two storey bit.

JM: Yes.

JH: Certainly, I'm guessing for the second part of the infant school we would walk to school. We were I think- there was the odd occasion we had the luxury- because one set of my cousins actually lived in- my parents' house was there, and my uncle Jimmy and cousin Jimmy were only two doors along. And they eventually moved around to, another fifty yards away.

0h 24m 14s

JM: Right.

JH: There was sometimes- we had the luxury of my uncle would give us a lift down, but that was a luxury. That's how I can remember it, rather than a routine. But we walked to school and when we came tae secondary school, I can still remember the detail, my other cousin, John Crowe, who was the same age as me, whereas my cousin Jimmy's a year older. I used to walk to school with ma cousin John because we were in the same year, and he would come down Traprain Terrace, pick me up at my gate and what I can remember- we obviously got stuck in so much of a routine walking tae school, secondary school, that sometimes we never talked. And I can still remember that. My cousin would come down and sometimes we would never say a word all the way tae school. And then he went tae the lower class. We were always in- I was always in the higher classes.

JM: Gosh.

JH: Not [?] the lower classes. And then when it came to leaving the Knox, they- I could point to the corner, I would stand in the corner, just inside what's the carpark now, meetup and then sometimes we would walk all the way home without saying a word. I can still remember that.

JM: Goodness.

JH: Didn't happen very often but I can remember that.

JM: Just kind of force of habit. That's what you do.

JH: We'd have to wait on each other-

JM: Yes.

JH: Even though we've nothing to talk about today and... Strange what you remember.

JM: Aye, but you must have been comfortable enough in each other's company-

JH: Oh, yeah, yeah.

JM: -that you didn't feel the need to talk.

JH: I think it was more the routine of, you know, walk up and down to school. Cause we never thought about why are some people getting lifts to school? We just walked to school. But going back to St Mary's, a few things I can remember there. I can remember- now it would either be primary one or primary two, and they had- was it the Ladybird books?

St Mary's Primary School – 0h 26m 12s

JM: Could be.

JH: And because St Mary's was the catholic school, I can remember the basket coming out from the teacher full of Ladybird books. We got to pick a book. And for some reason she'd put crayons or paint down, I can't remember the detail, but I started crying, and I thought we had to paint each other's faces. Don't ask me why, I've no idea. Cause I can still remember crying that I didn't want to paint each other. Why I thought that, I've no idea. But I can remember crying, she goes what's wrong? I say 'I don't want to paint myself'. She's saying 'yer no painting yerself, yer getting a book and then yer drawing...

JM: Can you remember any of the books? Any titles?

JH: Nah.

JM: No?

JH: I just remember they were Ladybird books. They were the little hardback books?

JM: Yes.

JH: Full of about ten pages, or something like that. So, that was my first memory of school. Second memory of school was we had Mrs Robertson was a teacher. Her husband, Jimmy Robertson, had Robertson's the tobacconist's.

JM: Right.

JH: And he also had the little food... Now the Nungate minimarket? And she was what ye call a battle-axe at school. Take it that's ok for... I'm telling it as it is [*laughter*].

JM: As it is, uhuh.

JH: And she was a battle-axe. I hated this woman cause I was quite timid. I was quite a timid person, I wouldn't say boo tae a ghost.

JM: Mmhm?

JH: Hated her with a passion, cause she was just so intimidating.

JM: She obviously did something, probably early on, that cause you to feel that way about her.

JH: But she... Well, what I can remember is she presented herself as a battle-axe.

0h 28m 00s

JM: Right.

JH: That's what I can remember. I can't remember her doing anything that may have triggered that but she always portrayed hersel as a battle-axe.

JM: So it could've been-

JH: Other teachers were nice as pie.

JM: -a discipline thing?

JH: Could be, uhuh.

JM: Yes.

JH: And I know my mother will still embarrass us and bore us to this day with 'the amount of times that you didn't want to go to school because you had Mrs Robertson!' och.

JM: Oh dear.

JH: So I can remember that. Another fond memory of St Mary's was we had a teacher, and I can even remember her name, ... Miss Di Caccia

JM: Right.

JH: [?]. And they had- her family had an ice cream parlour in Portobello, who were there – they might still be there today – but they were there quite recently.

JM: Yes. I know the name, yes.

JH: Miss Di Caccia. I could be making this up but something rings bells with me that she was a temporary teacher and we loved her.

JM: Right.

JH: Just whatever she done, whatever style she had, we loved her. I can't remember what it is she done that made her well-loved.

JM: I assume she'd be young and enthusiastic.

JH: Aye. There was- her style, we just loved her. And then another memory of St Mary's is we used to have- is this named? If I say names, cause it's no very derogatory. No, it is derogatory, it's...

JM: It's maybe better not to name...

JH: We had a guy [*laughter*]... We had a guy, he still lives in Haddington, who was the class hothead.

JM: Right.

JH: And me being quiet as a mouse... Somebody looked at him the wrong way or the teacher asked him to do something he didn't want to do and desks got flung, 'rRight out the class then!' And I can always remember it, it must've been the end of term. It was either Christmas or end of term, summer, the school had a little games cupboard and it had a pool table-

0h 30m 12s

JM: Right.

JH: And this pool table would come out on the last day of term, and because he was the school hothead, he was the school- he was always the first to play on that table. And I can always remember I would've so loved to have a game of snooker or pool where I was, but because I was the quiet wee mouse I never had a hope in hell of ever getting near that table because others were stronger characters.

JM: Yes.

JH: Ye know, so I can always remember that as well. It's never bothered me but I can always remember that detail.

JM: Yeah, the stronger characters take over, don't they?

JH: They absolutely take over.

JM: It casts such a shadow over school time for other people because...

JH: It wasn't bullying.

JM: No.

JH: I wouldn't have labelled it as bullying, it was just they were stronger characters than me.

JM: Yes.

JH: I wouldn't have had a hope in hell of having a shot on that. I would've so loved to be able tae...

JM: What sort of discipline was there put in place for a character like that?

JH: I can never... I can never remember discipline.

JM: No?

JH: No.

JM: Because the belt would still be something that would be used at that time.

JH: I can never remember that at primary school.

JM: No?

JH: Can remember it at secondary school.

JM: Yeah.

JH: But not primary school. Cannot remember any of that, nah. And another thing with primary school, which I think is quite important, is the catholic primary school over the wall from the protestant King's Meadow school.

JM: Yes.

JH: We never had any trouble at all. I'm only saying this because at the time it was just I went to one school, they went to another.

0h 32m 02s

JM: Yes.

JH: There was no religious [?] there because of one religion, because of my mother's religion, and I'm non-religious now. I'd be first in the queue to abolish religious schools. You know, I went to one but that was only because my mother put us there. But the only reason I mentioned that is because we had a neighbour whose son went and he had nothing but trouble with-

JM: Really?

JH: -talking about Fenians and that, and bricks getting flung between the walls between King's Meadow and St Mary's. And he... It's probably too strong to say he had a terrible time of it but you know, it was a...

JM: I don't remember-

JH: Characteristic that it was an issue. I never had any of that at all.

JM: I don't remember anything, I was only at King's Meadow for one year, just when it opened, and then I went on to Knox Academy but I do remember confrontational times when I was at the old Haddington Public School. Between Haddington Public School and children from St Mary's.

JH: I have no recollection of anything like that.

JM: But once the school separated I don't think so. But speaking about the religious side, can you remember was there a huge religious influence in your time at St Mary's? Did you go a lot along to the church or...?

JH: We went in the major events like Easter.

JM: And would that be the whole school would go?

JH: From what I can recollect.

JM: Right.

JH: I can remember there were certain ceremonies throughout the year. I'm guessing Easter has to have been one and whatever the other significant catholic calendar dates are.

JM: Right.

JH: I'm no religious now at all. Zero. So I've forgotten it but I can remember, I'm slightly guessing, a handful of times a year we used to get to go to the church.

JM: Right.

JH: And we used to get to walk down the little path, ye know the little path that runs- ye know Millfield House? That sits and looks over the sports centre-

JM: Yes.

JH: -there's a right narrow path. I can remember we used tae get to walk there ourselves. Now, you'd have to have hi-vis vests.

JM: Yes, you've got to do it properly, yes.

JH: Twenty-five adults surrounding you in case a cat attacked you or something. In those days ye just go to go to school and back. I can remember doing that but tae us it was just a- it wasnae a religious event, it was a 'we're getting out of school' [*laughter*].

JM: And did the priest come along and have a lot to do with your education?

JH: Can't remember the priest coming tae us at all, nah. I cannot remember that being a school that was influenced- not even heavily influenced- I cannot remember that school, my education, being influenced by religion.

JM: No? Because it's always interesting that, from a teaching side, a catholic teacher can teach in a non-denominational school but it used to be that it didn't work the other way. Ye had to get special permission because ye didn't have the catholic background.

JH: I can't remember anything that was religious influence-

JM: No?

JH: -at primary school at all. Apart from getting to go to church every now and again.

JM: And when you went up to Knox Academy, were there things that you did with the King's Meadow children to make it easier for starting Knox Academy? Ye know, nowadays they do visits and everything to acclimatise to the new buildings and the different routines but when you started was it just well this is you finished and after the holidays you'll go there? Do you remember?

JH: I think it was, really, yeah.

JM: Yes.

JH: I don't think we got any- nowadays they're starting it months ahead.

JM: Oh, yes, uhuh.

JH: Cause we went in- I went into 1T, T for Tulloch, Mrs Tulloch. Remember the geography teacher?

Knox Academy – 0h 36m 04s

JM: I do, uhuh.

JH: Well, she- was it 1T or 2T? I had Mr Burns, Mrs Tulloch, and was it 1B or 1T...? Anyway, Burns or Tulloch was my form teacher.

JM: Right.

JH: Yeah, and... Ah, I can't remember. I think there was enough of us, I can't remember it being an issue, I think we must've been enough to see familiar faces you did know but-

JM: Yes.

JH: -ye know, we were meeting new faces and...

JM: And do you remember, were the classes graded when you started?

JH: Not in first and second they weren't.

JM: No?

JH: Not when a started. Ye did get graded for third- first year ye didn't get graded, was it second year ye did? Or was it third and fourth ye did? Do ye know the answer or are ye asking?

JM: No, I'm asking, I'm asking. When I started it was graded from the start.

JH: definitely third and fourth ye were. No ye must have been graded in second, because I was in 2T.

JM: Right.

JH: I was in 2T for Tulloch.

JM: Right.

JH: So it must've been Mr Burns was my first year one, so you weren't graded then.

JM: No.

JH: But I went to second- I was two, I was a top class fourth year.

JM: Right.

JH: Yeah.

JM: And was there anything about Knox Academy? Any subjects that you particularly look back on fondly? Not because- not necessarily because ye excelled in them, but any classes that ye maybe particularly enjoyed or teachers that you can remember clearly? I mean, do you remember assemblies?

JH: Yeah, I remember the assemblies, yeah.

JM: The whole school used to meet.

JH: Yeah. No strong memories of them but they must not have been very eventful.

JM: No.

JH: As far as I was concerned. The teachers, I remember Mrs Tulloch, I don't know why I remember her but her son [?] was in the neighbourhood just recently, so maybe that's why I can remember her. Mr Burns, he was a quiet man.

JM: Did you have Mr MacAskill at all?

Mr MacAskill – 0h 38m 04s

JH: I ha Mad Max, yes. He was a character. I was in the Latin class.

JM: What do you remember about him? I remember him as well, and he also taught David and our eldest son *[laughter]*.

JH: Well, on Lost Haddington actually, there's a great debate on and I still think I'm correct. I used to call him Mad Max, M-A-X, but some people say no, he was Mad Mac.

JM: I remember him as Mad Mac, for MacAskill.

JH: Yes, but I... I'm sure we used to call him Mad Max.

JM: Uhuh.

JH: So, anyway he was. *[laughter]* He was mad. No, I can always remember, cause he got an OBE or a-

JM: Did he?

JH: An OBE or an MBE.

JM: I didn't know.

JH: And he- I can remember that he brought in a carriage clock that he got presented with. And he was so loopy, you used to wind this back – in those days it was mechanical – you used to wind it up and you must have had to press a button and the hands started to go like that, and he'd go 'here, look at my clock, I've been short changed'. And it was him just playing a joke. And I can remember the clever ones-

JM: Back left.

JH: Got to sit at the back of the class. The not so clever ones got to sit at the front. So he could spend more time with ye and keep an eye on ye. I can't remember where I sat in Latin. He made a lasting- he made a positive lasting impression.

JM: Very much, yes. Yeah, I agree.

JH: In fact, when I put a Lost Haddington picture up I was actually surprised how many positive comments were made.

JM: Yes.

JH: Cause sometimes on electronic media, ye get what's called the keyboard warriors-

JM: Right.

JH: -who are not articulate and they can be really quite derogatory without substantiating why they're coming out with that, ye know?

JM: Oh.

JH: They want to just cross paths and nothing will say otherwise. But, em, so I can remember him-

Oh 40m 00s

JM: But I suppose as well, he was only really dealing with children who- because they were in top classes-

JH: Yes.

JM: -were keen to be in school.

JH: Yes, probably.

JM: So he wasn't having to deal with behavioural issues and lack of interest.

JH: True. Yeah, I hadn't thought of that, yeah.

JM: But I do remember that if ye did well in the test ye were moved to the back left.

JH: Back left, aye. I do remember going to the back, aye.

JM: And he rearranged the class every week.

JH: Aye, that's right.

JM: And did he jump off the desk when you were in his class? When he was re-enacting some Greek myth or something he used to jump off the desk.

JH: I remember when he had the black cloak on, he used to come in with the black cloak.

JM: Uhuh.

JH: And he used to have the belt over his shoulder, underneath the black cloak.

JM: I don't ever remember a belt but the black cloak and the cane.

JH: He had the black cloak with the belt over- no very often that I can remember that, because I was a wee timid thing remember.

JM: Right.

JH: So I remember these things, and the black belt- eh, the black cloak over him, I remember him swaying in.

JM: Yeah.

JH: He would sway in like that, but I can't remember him jumping.

JM: And have you seen him in recent years?

JH: No.

JM: He doesn't really look that much older. So he must've been quite a young man. But somebody who's not visibly aged.

JH: Aye.

JM: But.

JH: I can remember him. Going back to your question, favourite subjects. I liked my- again because of my mechanical interest which may or may not have been triggered by my uncle-

JM: Your welding?

JH: His welding and lawn mower engines and cement mixer engines. We used to have- we used to get separate woodwork, separate metalwork classes then.

JM: Mmhm?

JH: And I used to quite like that. Probably getting my hands dirty.

JM: Yeah.

JH: Mr Boyd, or Porky Boyd, as we used to call him. Just tell it as it is. Em, there was Mr McFarlane, who I heard has died recently actually, that came as a shock. Em, I don't think they jump out as being absolute favourite classes but I used to like those classes.

JM: Yeah. So, there are things that have- they've stuck with you though, haven't they?

0h 42m 04s

JH: Yeah. We had **Doc Orr** in physics, I used to be terrified of him, cause he was quite an intimidating- he had quite an intimidating look about him. **Doc Orr.**

JM: And I seem to remember- in memory he was quite tall.

JH: He was tall.

JM: And he always wore a suit too.

JH: He had the big side burns, and he had the pinstriped- the big white pinstriped suits. The big side burns. He used to smoke like a chimney and he had- the other physics teachers used to have like an adjoining bit you could go disappear in-

JM: Yes.

JH: -the land of a physics teacher.

JM: There was also a chemistry teacher called Mr- Mattie Smith.

JH: Chemistry was ma worst subject. Could not pay attention.

JM: Right, and Fred [Purry?] he was a biology teacher.

JH: My Purry, aye, in biology. I remember him, yeah. I used to hate **Doc Orr**, just because he was intimidating, me being a quiet, shy, retiring type. He never personally bothered- he never-

JM: Right.

JH: -personally picked me out but I was terrified of him. Can remember that. And he was another one that if he thought you were a waste of space you got to sit at the back.

JM: Yeah.

JH: And he would tell you to sit at the back, ... and he would do his, you wouldnae get away with it these days, what's the phrase I'm looking for, he would mebbe give ye... He would mebbe take- I'm just making this up, but he would mebbe take a pen and unscrew it and say 'here, take an hour to put that pen together cause you're nae good for anything else'.

JM: Oh gosh.

JH: He would do that type of thing.

JM: Uhuh.

JH: He would humiliate ye, but some of these people deserved that humiliation because they just weren't interested. But physics, I was interested in physics, but he dominated the physics class cause

of his personality. And I always remember he belted someone, I can't remember what for, and because I sat- they had the big long benches in the physics classes then?

The Belt – 0h 44m 00s

JM: Yes, were they big long wooden benches?

JH: Big, long, probably wooden.

JM: And he's on an elevated bench at the front?

JH: He was on the front, and ye had these big long benches-

JM: Yes.

JH: -and I, for some reason I always sat at the end, don't know why. Anyway, so obviously there was somebody he needed to belt, so he went out in the corridor and ye heard the *[belt sound effect X2]*. And he opened the door and we're all like this, and because I'm on the end he says- he handed me the belt and he says 'take that back tae' and I had to take it back to someone.

JM: Uhuh.

JH: And whoever it was that got it- remember he was upstairs... As you went through assembly hall-

JM: He was in the top corridor.

JH: -with that triangle-

JM: Yeah.

JH: -you went up that corridor, went to the back, ye went up the stairs and he was in the first room.

JM: Mmhm.

JH: And the stairs were too, and that person was lying in a heap in the middle o the stairs.

JM: Oh gosh.

JH: After having been belted.

JM: The person he belted.

JH: Lying in a heap. And that stuck with me, that's just wrong. I always think how they should...

JM: Yes.

JH: Anyway, now I will mention it cause it's worth mentioning. So that sticks in my mind.

JM: Mmhm?

JH: And the bit I'm gonna mention is, ye know how ye hear of all these people getting done for like... Like your Jimmy Savilles of the world? Ye know they get done for what was deemed- some of it was deemed acceptable then. Some of it is inexcusable but some of the behaviour then was deemed acceptable behaviour, and it was very, very male dominated back then. And so you now get court cases twenty, thirty years later where 'naw, I'm gonna take exception to what they done to me'-

JM: Yes.

JH: -and they get taken through the courts. I say there are some teachers who should be taken through the courts for how they treated some pupils. Regardless of why they needed to belt them. And tell that person lying in a heap that I can still remember that at fifty-four.

0h 46m 02s

JM: Yes.

JH: That's just wrong.

JM: Yes.

JH: Ye know, regardless of what they'd done to get belted.

JM: Yeah.

JH: So that was **Doc Orr**... Another memory from primary school, if I can jump back, which stuck with me was again, I'd probably deem myself a shy, retiring type. Em, remember St Mary's- it's still there today actually, there's a big mound of earth, grass that delineates the school, the new school that's there?

JM: Mmhm?

JH: There's a big mound of grass that delineates the boundary of the school to the football pitches.

JM: To the playing fields, yeah. Uhuh.

JH: That was then- that was there back then. We used to play football on that grass and it must've been a school competition and I can remember when I- I can remember I was just making up the numbers in football, and the ball came to my feet and I started running with it. It was like a scene out of the Tom Hanks film, ye know the...

JM: Yeah, Forrest Gump.

JH: Forrest Gump. And I started to run with it. I can remember just starting to run with the ball and I went past someone and... I laugh at it now. All I can remember was these guys 'John GO! GO JOHN GO JOHN GO JOHN!' and I was like elated that I ran more than ten feet with this ball and I got past someone. And then of course I just... I can still remember that.

JM: Yeah.

JH: Thinking-

JM: Your Forrest Gump moment.

JH: That was my fifteen seconds of somebody noticed me. Naw, it was like a strange- never bothered me in adult life, how you were the shy, retiring type and-

JM: Somebody recognised ye? That's good.

JH: They were putting ye on the pedestal, I thought, oh wow, I loved that. It was great *[laughter]*.

JM: Absolutely, yeah. So after Knox Academy you went on to, sort of, into the computing line and I'm wondering-

JH: No, it wasn't-

0h 48m 00s

JM: No?

JH: No, the computing wasn't-

JM: But you're in the computing line now?

JH: I'm in the computing line now, yeah, which is a mystery evolution.

JM: Yeah, because when you probably started computing would be very much in its infancy.

JH: It was micro-processing [?]

JM: Can you remember your first computer? There's a challenge.

JH: Yeah, I can yeah.

JM: Can you?

JH: If I could turn the clock back though?

JM: Ok.

JH: Talking about jobs, I'm just thinking the move from school to employment.

JM: Yes, and you said about an apprenticeship?

JH: It's worth mentioning my dad was a lorry driver all his life. So I didn't know anything other than lorry drivers and ma uncle who worked at the power station, and he's taking all this equipment in the red and green paint. My other uncle worked at cement works. So when it came to leaving school ye had the careers advice and I had an inclination to join the police. If ye turned the clocks back I would've loved to have joined the police. I think I would've made a great policeman, but I was very short sighted.

JM: Right.

JH: But that was one of ma- I wouldn't say insecurities at school, but I had the thick glasses on and the black curly hair, ye know, which was the stereotype- ye know, it was the black national health glasses then?

JM: Mmhm.

JH: Didn't really bother me it was black national health glasses but I was conscious that I was the specky four eyes. And there's still somebody in Haddington to this day, calls me specky four eyes [*laughter*].

JM: Aww, that's so unkind [*laughter*].

JH: But it didn't bother me, it didn't make me insecure. It confirmed that I was the shy retiring type, ye know, but not to the extent of I was losing sleep over it. Anyway, I'd have loved to join the police. So we had a careers advice and I think I said I'd love to join the police, but back then you had to have a minimum vision.

JM: Right.

JH: And it was if you don't pass go, if you need eye correction. Ye just don't even bother filling the form in. So I needed glasses, so I didn't even bother filling the form in.

JM: OK.

Leaving School – 0h 50m 02s

JH: Em, and it was- my dad was a lorry driver and I said I had visions of me driving a lorry wi boxes of crisps in the back for some reason, don't ask me why. No idea. In this [?] wi pickled onion crisps driving a lorry, that was my idea of a job. Cause I knew nothing else, ye know. Em... And... I can't remember the detail, but I had three interviews for an apprentice, one with the post office. And I went along wi- do ye know the McKinnons? Alan, Ian, Neil McKinnon they're my age. Ian'll be fifty-six, fifty-seven. The dad was a policeman, they lived in Millfield, ye know the cottages in Millfield, they're off Mill Wynd?

JM: I don't know them.

JH: Ian McKinnon- well I went with Alan McKinnon, who I came through school with to the post office for an apprenticeship interview. We went tae Scottish Power, I think it was like an electrician's. And then I went tae Ferranti for an interview as an electronic technician. And Alan, ma pal Alan who I still know to this day, he got offered the post office job. He's still there, but working part-time and he didn't get an interview for Ferranti, I did and I got offered that and the rest is history. The rest is history as they say.

JM: Right.

JH: So how I got invited I don't know. I can't remember that detail. Probably would be the careers master, I would say.

JM: Careers advice. But you've-

JH: I'm guessing.

JM: Yes.

JH: Cause I- well, my cousin Jimmy, he joined Ferranti the year before so he may've influenced it. I have to assume whoever told him to go to Ferranti for an apprentice interview has told me as well. I'm guessing.

JM: Were they Edinburgh based?

JH: They're very much Edinburgh, yeah, yeah.

JM: So it's not that they were really that local?

Ferranti – 0h 52m 00s

JH: No.

JM: So-

JH: The closest is Dalkeith-

JM: Yeah.

JH: -but ye went tae Edinburgh for apprenticeship, yeah.

JM: Uhuh, and it's a well-recognised name from then, isn't it?

JH: Yeah, yeah. Huge employer back then. Intae double figures the different sites across Edinburgh, closest one being Dalkeith and then they had a wee office at Tantallon. A wee radar station at Tantallon Castle.

JM: Right.

JH: But they're all gone. It's now just this Crewe Toll site and Ferry Road.

JM: Right, that's near the Western General, isn't it?

JH: Yeah. So, I got offered the job for Ferranti so I started there on 11th of August 1980 as an electronic technician. And I had a year still when I was fifteen years old. My claim tae fame. And you- so you served a year's apprenticeship at Robertson Avenue, getting the basics of electronics.

JM: Right.

JH: Back then it was what's called discreet components. So you had resistors, capacitors, transistors, wires that ye would join and solder. Now it's all microchips and that.

JM: So is it kind of like making circuit board type things?

JH: Making circuit boards, basic amplifiers, they were just teaching you the basics.

JM: Right.

JH: Right between joinery and electricians you would be.

JM: But you already had an insight into welding [*laughter*].

JH: Ah, yeah, aye. Well, it was soldering-

JM: Soldering, right.

JH: -there is a difference in the way that ye build them.

JM: Ok.

JH: And then well, the first year there then it's a four year apprenticeship. The second year you went to the closest site to where ye live, so I went to Dalkeith.

JM: Right.

JH: So I was at Dalkeith for about a year and a half, and then we had six month postings, as we called it. And at Dalkeith I went to what was called the measurements department. So I had- they used a laser and it was- if you had a factory that produced big rolls of linoleum or continuous sheets of paper or continuous sheets of material, this laser scanned it for defects.

JM: Right.

0h 54m 00s

JH: Rather than you sitting there, looking for holes or tears, this laser would scan it a lot quicker and it was stopping the machine, going look there's a bit that's got a fault in it, so it would cut that bit out. So we made, designed and made these laser scanners. Then I had six months in a planning department, the technical drawing type thing, writing up documents and that. And then my last six months was in the- what they called the service department, which was... They used to make the petrol pumps out at Dalkeith as well. And it was any modules that came from the petrol pumps that were broken, so you would have a circuit board that was on a jig and you would use an ammeter, or an oscilloscope and ye would get down to which component had burnt out or broken and replace it. And then you went- and then I went tae Edinburgh to Silverknowes factory, which is just along from

where Crewe Toll is now, below it. Silverknowes is now housing. Em, I went into the navigation systems that the military aircraft that ye see flying over-

JM: Right.

JH: It was the navigation system that tells them how far it is and by the way you're flying over Haddington, and if ye need to go to Edinburgh to drop off a bomb.

JM: Oh, gosh.

JH: Ye need to turn twenty degrees to the right and ye know...

JM: Ok.

JH: So I started- I was fixing these navigations and I got quite a name for myself, and fixing very early computers. But not computers as you and I know them now. These were in-house built computers.

JM: Right.

JH: Later we're on a wee chip, but they were massive things then. Now I got quite a name for myself.

JM: So what size of computer are we picturing?

JH: Oh, well the navigation box is about that size. It's got gyros and accelerometers in it.

JM: Right.

JH: That's what detects the movement.

JM: But starting computing are we-

JH: These are not the computers I do now.

JM: Oh, right, ok.

JH: These are the computers that drove that box.

JM: Just cause we were talking... I'm just going to put that light on. Yeah.

JH: Em, I got quite a name for masel, being able to fix these things. And then, this is the spark that came in for the computers, the career I have now. These things called personal computers were available and we used these personal computers to data log these navigation systems, cause you need to test the navigational systems were accurate.

0h 56m 30s

JM: Mmhm?

JH: So ye used- we used to have to manually record figures down. So we got these computers tae... We had the computers tae record the results and I- but they needed somebody to look after these computers, so I didn't program them as such but-

JM: Right.

JH: -I had to look after them. And I took myself back to the Knox for a night school class for word processing and spread sheets. And because 'oh John's doing something with computers at his local school, think he could look after these cause we know nothing about them apart from they've got flashing lights'.

JM: Yeah.

JH: And that's how I got involved with them, and of course these computers started to data log two systems so we need two computers and then they wanted to do reports, so they had another computer to do reports on it, and it printed out- pie charts were the big thing then. Now, pie charts just [*dismissive sound*]. And then they needed that computer to talk to that computer, so they had [the early doors?] networking, which was coax cable. And then the computers in the next building need to talk to these. So, you were there in the very early days as it basically evolved into what we know now as computing.

JM: Yeah. So you've kind of grown with computing, haven't you?

JH: I've grown with it, yeah. I've very much grown with it, yes.

JM: Yes.

JH: I've got stuff that kids now would think 'ye done what?' ye know?

JM: I know.

JH: Eh, so yeah... So eventually, that took my job- that, looking after the computers, took more time than me fixing these navigation systems.

0h 58m 08s

JH: I ended up- they then created an IT department. Cause there wasnae an IT department, cause there was no IT.

JM: There was no IT, yeah.

JH: And so I've been there from the start, yes. With IT.

JM: So for anybody, kind of wanting to talk back about the development of computing, you'd be the person to really come and talk to.

JH: A could tell you all the different evolution of computers, yeah. Cause the very first computers we got in didn't have any hard disks. They only had the green and black displays. And there was no colour then. There was no hard disks that contain all your programs now.

JM: Uhuh?

JH: It was all on floppies, and they were floppies because you could flex them. It was five and a quarter inch floppy disks back in those days. So, I've been there from the- yes, from the very beginning.

JM: I'll just...

JH: It makes ye feel old [*laughter*].

JM: Not really, no. Um, but I think probably the last thing I'd like to talk about really is your interest in Lost Haddington, because Lost Haddington- so many people in the town know Lost Haddington, John Hamilton. And it's such a credit to you that it's grown and you've got so many people following it and people all over the world probably link in to it and comment on the stuff that you post.

JH: Yeah, people all over the world, yeah.

JM: But what brought about that development? Is it just sort of a fondness for the town or-?

JH: I can't remember what sparked my interest, to be honest. The- how Lost Haddington started was, if you predate my involvement with Lost Haddington, because I worked on computers, I used to get to bring computers home with me and they had dial up modems back in those days, ye know the internet. And ye remember AOL? America Online?

Lost Haddington – 01h 00m 23s

JM: [I had an email address, uhuh?].

JH: AOL was the internet. Was that your email address?

JM: One of them.

JH: That means that it was a very early email address. AOL online, or it's America Online, that's what the acronym stands for. There's another bit of useless information for you. Em, don't know if you can remember but you used to get freebies, I think it was a CD and you put it into your computer and it gave you dial-up access and... So I was one of the first to be on the internet in Haddington, through dial-up. So, of course I had this thing called eBay, and you would dabble in eBay and that, and you were sort of struggling to well, what can a do with it. So you'd just type Haddington in and you would have, oh, somebody's selling a Haddington postcard.

JM: Right.

JH: And so I'd start buying postcards off the internet. The only- if I could pause and go back a step again? The only history of Haddington we ever knew about was my mother might have bought one of George Angus' Haddington Old and New, he used to produce old hardback books?

JM: The books? Yes.

JH: Ma mother probably bought one and thought 'oh that's quite interesting'. And that- back in those days that was the only look into the past you would ever get, unless the Courier printed an old picture from their archives. So, going back to my computer again, eBay, ye would buy a postcard-

JM: Yes.

JH: -that ye hadnae seen before. And of course, ye'd buy an art postcard, and another postcard and another postcard. And then this thing called Facebook came along.

01h 02m 02s

JM: Mmhm?

JH: And there was- are you on Facebook? Are ye?

JM: Yeah.

JH: Ye know how it works? Ye know it would come up with here's a suggested site for ye. You may be interested in. And I take it it's flashed up that there's a Lost Haddington and it was the girl whose name evades me, but she lived in the mill house, the Millfield House that looks over the carpark for the sports centre? That I referenced earlier there. Her dad was a musician. They've since moved away.

JM: I don't know them.

JH: She started Lost Haddington. And I was about number thirty something of the followers.

JM: Ok.

JH: There's now 4724 followers.

JM: Wow.

JH: As of last night. So I was number thirty odd in the followers for that, and of course I had these postcards. So because I had access to computers, I had access to a scanner, so I would scan the postcards. And I would put up, here's an old image of Haddington.

JM: Right.

JH: And folk would go 'oh that's great, that's oh' and she... What I seem to remember is she'd never put a single picture up herself, she just created it, which was actually off the back of Lost Edinburgh. Lost Edinburgh had already been established, so she's obviously decided to create a Lost Haddington. Never, from what I can recollect, she never put a single image up, she just created it. I started putting these scanned images up cause I had access to computers and scanners and all that. And I had these people going 'oh that's great', course that was it, the rest is history as they say.

JM: Yeah.

JH: Ye know it just snowballed from there. And then she eventually said look, you're basically our Lost Haddington, because she's just created it and everybody's commenting on mine. She said 'I'll make you an administrator of Lost Haddington', just so I can actually delete and manage and that. Then she ended up moving away with her father cause he was a musician and work took him away. So that's how I became lost Haddington. And then what would happen was individuals would say 'you need to speak to Jack Tully-Jackson and this guy George Angus, you need to speak to them because they've got huge collections'. So I can always remember, I phoned Jack Tully-Jackson and he lived in Hawthornbank Road then-

Jack Tully-Jackson – 01h 04m 30s

JM: Yeah.

JH: -before he moved to Knox Institute. And by this time, I'd accumulated quite a collection that I'd bought off eBay, books as well. I've got a first edition history of Haddington book which is my pride and joy. 1844 is the date of it-

JM: Right.

JH: -and I've yet to see another one but I know they are out there. But to have a first edition is quite unusual. Going to try and find one is what my challenge would be. So, I remember getting quite- phoning Jack and Jack's just gonna go, oh, he's just a young whippersnapper. Jack knows everything. I didn't know Jack from Adam, apart from how he was an old man. And I remember- and I can still remember going round to Jack's house and ye went to his door, and he had his wee howff on the left and all his collection, his collection of slides and print-outs. He had a lot of wartime stuff. And I can remember laying it out on the wee couch and I can remember full of enthusiasms I was 'Jack have you seen this?' and he was quite, ye could see that he was like oh, this guy's quite serious, ye know, he's not just somebody that's got a few postcards that ye can buy ten a penny. He's actually got some really good stuff, ye know? And Jack and me became really good friends, I would say, to the extent he would be phoning me saying 'can ye pop in?' almost on a monthly basis.

JM: Yes.

JH: Both Hawthornbank Road and his last days in the Knox Institute there. And then of course, with Jack opening the doors, he knew other people with collections who put me in touch, and I think I had a credibility about me, that was the impression I got.

01h 06m 12s

JM: Were you kind of his protégé?

JH: Well, yeah, aye, yes. Well, I was just a young whippersnapper is what Jack said.

JM: Uhuh?

JH: Cause he was in- ninety-two when he died, I think.

JM: Was he?

JH: 'Oh you're just a young laddie'. At fifty, to be told you're a 'young laddie' [*laughter*]... He'd been in touch with others who had equally interesting collections and I think rather than me just [?] like it was a fly by night, I must've gained trust and they gave me access to their collections, and George Angus was the one tae die for. And eventually George did give me access tae his whole collection.

JM: Yeah.

JH: He was hard work. I think he was very protective, didn't know me, ye know? He was- ye know, I could've ran off with his collection, so ye had to gain trust with him, I think. Eventually got George Angus' collection which was ma holy grail that I was after.

JM: Right.

JH: So now I get people contacting me and-

JM: From all over?

JH: -have you seen the pictures I put up the other week there? There were people contacting me, saying I found these in my granny's attic and this was in my sister's attic. The one with the car with the gas bag on the top?

JM: I saw one with that you posted, yes. But I haven't looked very closely at that one.

JH: That was the sister's attic- sorry, the one with the gas bag was the granny's attic. So, that's how Lost Haddington started.

JM: It's a super thing for the town, and you must put in hours and hours of work.

JH: I put in hours, yes.

JM: Hours and hours and hours.

JH: I put a serious amount of time intae that, yeah.

JM: Yes, and it's very much to the benefit...

JH: And it paid off with the likes of Jack Cunningham.

JM: Well, yes.

JH: That alone, I would say, makes it all worthwhile.

JM: But for the purpose of the recording, we've not mentioned Jack Cunningham on the recording.

Jack/John Cunningham – 01h 08m 04s

JH: Oh, yes.

JM: So it would kind of be... How briefly could you sum up how Lost Haddington has really helped someone to find their family? Because that's really what you did.

JH: I'll try and summarise it.

JM: [*laughter*].

JHL [*laughter*] So we had- there was a guy George Angus, who had this to die for collection, which I've alluded to before, and he- George was meticulous in the detail he recorded on the slides. I meticulously scanned each slide and transcribed what George- George's detail onto the file name on my electronic image, so that we could use the power of the computer to- if ye gave me a keyword, like 'plasterer' or 'Rosehall' the computer would instantly find the image with that reference to it. So then, anyway, out of the blue now last autumn, this lady from up the north of Scotland said 'do you know a John Cunningham who was- sorry, a Jack Cunningham who was a plasterer?' She says 'it's a long story but he fathered a child who went straight into an orphanage but this man, who's now seventy-four, wants to find out who his father was. So, all he knows is that he was a plasterer from Haddington'. So, using my Lost Haddington collection search facility, I searched for 'Cunningham'. It came up with quite a few hits that were totally irrelevant, then put in 'plasterer' and lo and behold, the computer came back with an image from George Angus of a John Gibby Cunningham, a plasterer, and the dates matched and the rough age of the guy matched as well. And, to cut a long story short, by putting a search out in Lost Haddington for 'anybody know a John Gibby Cunningham', we had these handful of individuals who came forward and went 'yeah, I know who that guy is, I can fill the gaps in'. So after seventy-four years, this David Simpson, who now lives in New York State was able to track down his birth father who he'd never knew about. And I'd corrected the name he thought his father was, he was really a John, not a Jack.

0h 10m 44s

JM: Yeah, but it's a fascinating story and one that people who're interested in it could access on Lost Haddington, on the website, couldn't they? It'd still be there on Facebook.

JH: Yeah, if ye search John Gibby Cunningham. It's still there, yeah.

JM: And the other thing that's been very well-received has been the World War One thistles-

JH: Yeah.

JM: -that you were behind. How did that come about?

JH: I remember all...

JM: Could we- actually before we say how it came about, would you like to explain what it was? The World War One thistle commemoration?

JH: It was the centenary, aye. Well, 2018 was the centenary of the ending of World War one, or the Great War as it was known back then, it only got the World War One moniker a few years later. And I'm also a member of Haddington Community Council and the first of the four years centenary, so

2014, I arranged- and I've got no particular interest in the war, so I'm at a loss as to why I decided to run with this, to be honest with ye.

World War One Centenary Commemorations – 01h 12m 00s

But through ma Lost Haddington I was aware of a family called the Cranstons, where seven brothers all went to World War One, four were killed directly in World War One, two died of their injuries after war. Well, they died prematurely as a result of their injuries and there was only the seventh brother was unscathed from the war. So, probably a combination of Lost Haddington knowing about the Cranstons, centenary of the war, me being on the community council, I made an inquiry about could the Cranstons be commemorated because their story alone is unprecedented in Scotland... (And, oh, I got a cramp there)... And probably unprecedented in Britain but without doing research we can't validate that. So after asking like the local British Legion, who were very good, they managed to arrange on armistice Sunday for the 2014 centenary seven soldiers to represent the seven brothers. And at the armistice parade these seven soldiers laid seven wreaths in memory. So that started the ball rolling for the first year of the four year centenary commemorations. The second year, there was a David [Cowan] whose relative contacted me to say he's not on the memorial, is there something that could be done? So what we did for the second year, our 2015 centenary is we got his, I think she was the great-granddaughter to lay a wreath at that year's armistice, and coincidentally he was actually buried in St Mary's on that exact day a hundred years ago.

01h 14m 04s

So in 2015, well, whenever armistice Sunday was, the closest to the 11th of November, she laid the wreath on the hundred years that her great-grandfather died, or was buried in St Mary's. The third year was a bit of a non-event, so there was a pattern emerging: I'd done something for the first year, arranged something for the second of the four years, the third year I tried to get a cannon... Again through Lost Haddington, it transpires that there was a cannon used to sit next to the monument fence where these thistles are and it used to look down the High Street, because there was an old Doctor Robarts who was a well-loved doctor in Haddington. His biography was written by his daughter I think it was, and he can remember sitting on this gun and looking down the High Street-

JM: Right.

JH: -and it was a gun that was distributed- was it the Boer War that was 1890s?

JM: Mmhm.

JH: Em, so what a tried to do was get a gun to be placed there again, but it just didn't happen. There were too many people shaking their heads going oh health and safety, we cannae have that. So nothing happened the third year. And for the final year I thought how can we finish up such a monumental commemoration? And I thought I've got a 130 souls on the war memorial how... Could we do a 130 events? Could we do each day that they died do a commemoration? I think, but that's a big ask and I'm working nine till five, and I thought well, they've given their lives, so what's 130 days out of one year of my life, ye know? Can we run with this? Now, what's worth noting here, is there was a retired solicitor Alistair Sheppard had actually researched all 130 names and he'd published a book with a biography of each of the 130 soldiers. So we had all the information to hand: when they died, who they were, and if it wasn't for that book this-

01h 16m 20s

JM: It wouldn't have happened?

JH: -wouldn't have happened. Cause there's just too much research required. So, decided to make inquiries with analysing the data, 130 names were condensed into 101 dates, cause there were some dates during the big battles where there was multiple casualties. So there was gonna be 101 separate events, or committals, as I called them. And slowly but surely it was just nah, we're just gonna have to do this, and we commissioned a blacksmith out in Cousland to hand make ... each of the thistles. So we got community council funding to pay for that. We had a great guy, Les Mitchell, who lives just up Rosehall? Just off to the other side of the road? Up along.

JM: Right.

JH: Les being a well-known do it yourself man from the golf course, he agreed to paint them, and we got brass nameplates, he agreed to mount the brass nameplates onto them. Without him this again this would've been almost impossible.

JM: Yeah.

JH: So he got the raw thistles, prepared them. Engaged the pipe band as well – pipe band, I have to take my hat off to them, they came out in their regalia. One, sometimes five, six pipers attended every single soldier's committal on the day the soldier died and from their last known address in Haddington to the memorial fence up at the Ferguson monument there. And there was only two where we never had a piper, one because of the bad snow, and two because there was just call offs at the last minute.

01h 18m 14s

JM: Uhuh.

JH: But we basically done all 101 from the full 130 soldiers and it was well-received.

JM: It was a huge achievement.

JH: A lot of work went into that, yeah.

JM: But is it- it's a huge achievement that deserves recognition for everything that you did to make it happen. And also the thanks for the people who helped put it into place.

JH: Yeah, there was...

JM: There was regular figures.

JH: Yeah.

JM: Every time you went, weren't there?

JH: Yeah. We had Rab, the flag-bearer, never missed a single one.

JM: Uhuh.

JH: Les was just so dependable, Les Mitchell, so dependable. I believe when I was working nine to five Les was retired, yeah, so there was people turning up, the pipers were there as well.

JM: Yes.

JH: I did whatever to bring it all together, so.

JM: No, a real credit to you.

JH: Now the last- it's actually going to be finished off on Tuesday. The- it's a hundred years to the day when the surviving soldiers returned to Haddington on Tuesday.

JM: Is it?

JH: On the 30th of April 1919 they arrived at Haddington railway station. There's actually postcard images that are actually dated 30th of April 1919. So the providence is unquestionable-

JM: Yes.

JH: -with what date they returned. So we're actually commemorating a tree in the little grass park in front of the railway.

JM: Uhuh?

JH: Cause the tree's already been planted, actually, that's for horticultural reasons, but there's a wee plaque gonna be unveiled and two pipers are gonna play a lament.

JM: Right.

JH: Just to commemorate the soldiers returning. And that's the centenary of World War One completed.

01h 20m 05s

JM: Yes.

JH: So we're not quite finished yet.

JM: I didn't realise about that date, no.

JH: No, hopefully there'll be something in the Courier this week.

JM: Yes. Hopefully.

JH: Cameron's not confirmed he's got it, which is [*worried/disgruntled sound*], anyway, yes.

JM: Anyway, I think if we just sort of round it off, cause we've talked for a while and if there's anything that- I mean I know you noted down about your grandfather's coal fire.

JH: Yeah.

JM: So if you wanted to speak about that, and then if there's anything else that you feel that you'd like to add to the conversation, that we've mebbe not touched on?

JH: The grandparents just- there's just a memory. It's not a special memory but just a memory from the grandparents that...

JM: Ah, but they're the ones that count.

JH: That was worth mentioning wi the other little stories we had about my grandparents' house. But a fond memory is they did have a coal fire, and my granddad would cut up the kinilin wood, as he would call it, and he would get the faffing around – a love that word – he would faff around getting this fire all lit. And then we would have the slices of bread on the poker or a fork.

JM: Right.

JH: And without burning your hand, try and cook this bread in the front of the fire. That's just a memory I can remember. They also had a stone- their living room floor was stone but they had a big carpet in the middle of it. So ye had a border where the carpet didn't reach the walls, ye had a border of cold concrete all the way around the living room.

JM: Yeah.

JH: Which I can still remember. This brown leather sofa, which just for some reason sticks in yer memory. Nothing special-

JM: No.

JH: -apart from remembering the shape and colour and smell of the sofa.

JM: But if ye were to go back into the house now it would seem much smaller than it did-

Dad's Accident – 01h 22m 04s

JH: Yeah, but everything looks smaller when ye look back yeah.

JM: -when you were a child, uhuh. Cause I know I've found going back to a house similar to the one my grandparents were in or that I grew up in, and ye think, gosh was it really this small?

JH: Yeah. Well, even cars, going back-

JM: Yeah.

JH: -when ye look at old Minis, old Ford Escorts and that.

JM: Oh, I know.

JH: They look tiny compared to now.

JM: I had a real Mini. No. Is there any other stories, or any other memory that... Or anything else that you'd like to mention just to finish off?

JH: My dad had a bad accident, which I can remember. My dad being a lorry driver, and he, my dad- I can't remember this but he used to drive like through to the west of Scotland and ye obviously had overnights away with this driving. But I can't remember that. I can't really remember my dad to be honest with ye, in childhood times. Well, not positively or negatively, I just can't remember really, apart from my cousins.

JM: So is that because he worked away from home?

JH: It must've been because he worked away quite a lot of the times.

JM: And was your mum a stay at home mum?

JH: She...

JM: Or for most of your childhood?

JH: She would stay at home, but she worked for Robertson's the sweetie shop, and I can remember- ok, I'm digressing a bit there, I'll go back to my mother the now. I can remember my mother worked at Robertson's the sweetie shop, being the husband of the battle-axe Mrs Robertson at school.

JM: Yes, I'd made that connection.

JH: *[laughter]* Yes, the connection. And I can remember coming home from school, I'm guessing late primary, early secondary, and I was tae stand in the gap between the main sweetie counter and the freezer with the ice poles and ice lollies back then, we never had the luxury of Cornettos and Magnums back then. I can always remember just having tae stand in that corner until the shop was shut up and then I'd come back home wi mother. But I can't really remember much of my father, because he probably worked away but I can still remember getting ready for school, now I think it was 1974 he had a bad accident. And I could still see Mr Hogg, who lived up [?] coming up the path ye could just sense, no, there's something no right here. Mother obviously went tae meet him and ye just had a sense of why's he coming tae the house when we're getting ready to go to school?

01h 24m 38s

JM: And who would Mr Hogg be?

JH: Well, he was a friend of... Sorry, he was a friend of my dad.

JM: Right, ok.

JH: Ma mum and dad- I think he worked for one of the companies that ma dad worked for, actually, and that's why he got the job of coming. And I can still see him coming up the path and thinking there's something no right here. And what had happened was the lorry was this occasion- the hot tar- it looks like a petrol tanker to you and me, but it had hot tar in it, and this happened through in the west. I only found this out recently, I thought it was- although the company was from Tranent, it actually happened in the west. I thought the accident happened in Tranent. He was up and he must have to measure the depth of the hot tar, there must've been a big air bubble so when he took the hatch off it blew hot tar in his face.

JM: Oh no.

JH: So of course, the top of this lorry must be twelve feet. He got blown off the top of the lorry, and it was crawling in hot tar and his hands to this day are permanently disfigured like that... I'm like freezing my joints for...

JM: For the purpose of the recording.

JH: For the recording. Freezing the fingers in a sort o claw shape. That's shiny skin and he had little walnuts as nails. And his shin skin was burnt off exposing his bones. He had tae have his shins shaved so the skin could be, what do they call it? Skin grafted. All over his legs. And I can... So that's what this Mr Hogg was coming to tell ma mother, and I can't remember this but ma father was off work for about two years with this.

01h 26m 26s

JM: Mmhm?

JH: And what I can remember, you went to Canniesburn in Glasgow, which was the burns unit and because the accident happened in Glasgow, I'm assuming I know now that's why he went there. And I can remember going through with ma uncle into the hospital and not wanting to see ma dad cause I had this vision of what I was expecting to see, cause I knew it was a burn. And he had plaster... And I did go and see him but I can remember not wanting to see him, but I did and I can recollect some of the contraptions they gave him at the time. Can always remember he had a white plaster [plaster?] cast on his lower arm, and then he had little springs that would project out to little like thumb-thumb... What do they call the knitting thumb things with the little...?

JM: Thimbles.

JH: Thimbles. So it was like little thimbles on springs protruding from the back of this plaster cast, and he was to put his fingertips into the little thimbles and the springs were tae allow him tae exercise his joints.

JM: Right.

JH: So that- because his fingers were fused like that with the heat, but he could still move that bit. So these wee things... I can still see him wi this thing, trying to keep his fingers supple.

JM: It's obviously had a very strong impression on you.

JH: Yeah.

JM: You can remember it so clearly.

JM: I can remember that, aye. So I can remember that as a childhood memory for me. Then he did go back driving again and he just- he bleeds quite easy cause the skin's shiny. If ye knocked it, he bleeds quite easy but... So that was another memory I can remember, ye know?

01h 28m 02s

JM: Yeah. Gosh, that's a very scary one for a young boy to be put in that situation, too.

JH: I never...

JM: Just take it in your stride?

JH: I never had any fears of oh, ye know, is Dad not gonna be here or anything like that.

JM: No, but it's the anticipation of what's happened.

JH: It didn't kill him prematurely or anything, it was never anything like that but I can still remember that man coming up and going-

JM: Yeah.

JH: 'I'm no gonna lie to you, he's no...' and I would have been ten at the time.

JM: Oh, well. Well, to finish on a happier note-

JH: Uhuh?

JM: -what records did ye buy?

JH: What records did I buy?

JM: Let's end up on something that's-

JH: It's the cringe factor section.

JM: Yeah. Bay City Rollers fan? Or was that later?

JH: I was Woody the drummer in the St Mary's school play. And I remember we had to run up the middle of the seating area-

JM: Is this re-enacting the Bay City Rollers?

JH: Yeah, this was part of the school concert and I-

JM: Gosh, I thought it was just off the cuff.

JH: No, and there was no Woody the drummer, was there?

JM: Oh, there was one called Woody, uhuh.

JH: Well I was the drummer, cause I remember it was waste paper bins with crepe paper tied to them – they were my drums. And I can remember we were tae run up in the middle aisle, jump ontae stage and then mimic to the Bay City Rollers, and I remember going head first cause I missed the stage [*laughter*]. That was ma debut and my last performance. So the Bay City Rollers, but that was just because it was a school play, not because I was particularly a strong fan.

JM: Yeah.

JH: My dad was heavily intae Elvis and a loved Elvis, I can remember that. I just loved- I still like Elvis to this day. That was a lasting memory. Interestingly, ma dad's from a musical family and he still plays the accordion to this day, and again it was an exercise for his fingers as well. And both his brothers were either drummers or accordion players, but none of his family were musical, none of-

01h 30m 06s

JM: Yeah?

JH: -my sisters, myself were musical but ma dad was. But first record... It was probably an Elvis one cause I bought all the Elvis posters you could buy and I can remember the time Elvis died, remember in my bed and ma mother opened the door and she says 'I've got some bad news for ye', and she goes 'Elvis is dead'. And I remember there was a big rush for more posters getting published, cashing in on it, buying more Elvis posters, I can remember that. A lot of my friends- cause I was intae motorbikes, a lot of my friends were into heavy metal and I just did not get heavy metal at all. We would go to the odd concert up at the Playhouse, where the speakers were literally the height of the roof, and I can remember all my pals doing the sort of head... Was it the head banging we used to call it?

JM: Uhuh.

JH: Aye, that's it. And then the head banging and getting carried away with this just noise. And I can remember standing and looking at them, along the line and going 'I'm no getting that' [*laughter*]. But I went with the flow, cause that's what my pals were into at the time.

JM: Yeah.

JH: Ah, records though... It'd be Elvis, I think. And I'm quite catholic with my taste, I like a bit of [heavy?] but equally I like a bit of Barbara Streisand, Elvis, if I get a really good dance pop tune I'm equally into that, quite wide ranging.

JM: Nothing that sticks out as any great purchase from Amos' in Market Street.

JH: No, no.

JM: Cause that's where you would buy records, or did you not?

JH: Probably might have. Meatloaf was a big influence, Jim Steinman.

JM: Uhuh?

JH: Jim Steinman wrote all the songs for Meatloaf. He had his own album and I loved that album. He had his- *Bad For Good* was the name of his album, which then became a Meatloaf song. Em, a loved that album, a probably played that to death, and the Meatloaf albums, played them tae death. I did like them at the time. I still like them.

01h 32m 15s

JM: Uhuh?

JH: But there were- now we'll never know but...

JM: No.

JH: And it was LPs back then of course.

JM: Of course, yes.

JH: Now it's all downloads and [whatnot?].

JM: I trust ye kept them?

JH: I don't have ma Meatloaf ones. I think I kept the odd Elvis one. I've got a collection of 45- the seven inch 45 ones?

JM: Mmhm.

JH: Again, nothing.

JM: No?

JH: Probably cringe factor rather than collector's items there.

JM: Oh well. Right. Well, I think we'll draw it to a close and I'll say thank you very much for-

JH: Ok.

JM: -sharing all these memories and I hope you've quite enjoyed the experience.

JH: Yeah.

JM: And I'll switch this off.