

Interviewee(s): Peter Aitchison (PA)	Interviewer(s): Margaret McCole (MM), Isabel Knox (IK)
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REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Dunbar

Running time: 00.00

MM: This is a recording with Peter Aitchison and Margaret McCole, on the 29th of July, and it's taking place in [REDACTED], West Barns, Dunbar. Ok, thank you for agreeing to take part in the interview today, Peter.

PA: Right.

MM: I'm just gonna ask you a few questions, if that's all right?

PA: Right.

MM: Ok. So, are you West Barns born and bred or Dunbar?

PA: No, Ah was born in Belhaven.

MM: Oh, right.

PA: Belhaven.

MM: Would they be quite separate places?

PA: Winterfield Farm, Belhaven.

MM: Indeed. When were you born?

PA: Do you know it? 1927.

MM: Goodness.

PA: Do you know as you go into Belhaven an turn up Back Road?

MM: Yes, Ah do.

PA: An then there's a wall wi windows in it?

MM: That's right, yes.

PA: Well, Ah was born in the top one, an it's just a wall now, you know. Then there's a gap into the caravan site, then there's a house there.

MM: Ok.

PA: Ah was born there in 1927.

MM: And did you live there most of your life?

PA: Pardon?

MM: Did you live there most of your young life?

PA: Oh, no, no...

MM: No.

PA: ...just a short while...

MM: Ok.

PA: ...came to West Barns.

MM: Ok, right. Were the villages quite separate in those days?

PA: Well, well, yes, same as now.

MM: Same as now.

PA: Except for the new houses.

MM: Right.

PA: Some o them.

MM: And you worked, where did you go to school?

PA: West Barns school.

MM: Right.

PA: 1935, five-year-old.

MM: Is that right? And would that be secondary school, there, as well?

PA: No, 1932.

MM: Ok.

PA: Five-year-old, beg your pardon [*laughter*].

IK: Aye yea, was the, where was the school in West Barns at that time then, Peter?

PA: Still there yet up the road, centre-.

IK: Oh, is it still on the same site, aye.

PA: There was studios.

IK: Oh, the studios, of course, aye.

PA: That's the old school, aye.

IK: Yes, the old school place, aye, of course.

PA: Two, four, seven classes.

IK: Aye.

MM: Ok. Sorry, I'm just going to interrupt and say Isabel Knox is here as well.

IK: Oh, sorry.

MM: No, no, don't be sorry.

IK: Aye, Ah was tripping in there.

MM: Absolutely perfect,

Running time: 02.00

MM: that was me I should have said that right at the very start.

PA: The headmaster was cawd Paddy Mills, his father was a light-keeper on Ailsa Craig.

MM: Oh, Paddy's Milestone.

PA: A long time ago.

IK: Ah.

PA: Oh no, [?] it was maybe another lighthouse somewhere else.

MM: Ok, no problem.

PA: He was William Mills, 'Paddy' because he wore a paddy hat.

MM: Right, what was a paddy hat like?

PA: Like a [?], you know, like a trilby.

MM: Oh, like a trilby style, Ah've got ye.

IK: Mm, great.

PA: Uhuh.

MM: Indeed. So, were you saying there that where the site of the West Barns primary school is now was always the site then?

PA: Yes.

IK: No, there's the studios in Stenton Road, it's Stenton Road, isn't it?

PA: Eh?

IK: Stenton Road is where ye go up to, where the old school is, isn't it?

PA: That's the old school...

IK: Yea.

PA: ...it's the old school.

IK: Aye, but, an its artists' studios now...

MM: Right.

PA: Uhuh.

IK: ...and has been for a long time, actually...

PA: Aye.

IK: ...hasn't it.

PA: It had a playground at the side o the road, an a playground at the back, an a toilet for the boys at the top, an a toilet for the girls at the bottom.

IK: Mm, mm. How many kids would have been at the school, when you were at the school then?

PA: How many?

IK: Aye.

PA: Well, there was three classes o infants.

IK: Uhuh.

PA: Three classes o medium an there were two or three classed in the big-.

IK: Oh, it's a big school, then, in these days.

PA: Big, oh aye.

MM: So, that would have been the secondary education as well? No.

PA: One, two-.

MM: No.

IK: Oh, Ah don't know, did you go on then to school in Dunbar for secondary education?

PA: When you were eleven year old.

IK: Aye.

MM: Ok.

PA: Aye, ye passed yer exam, the Qualifying exams, eleven or twelve, at West Barns, an then ye went tae Dunbar.

MM: Right.

IK: An at that-.

MM: And did you walk or cycle into Dunbar then?

PA: No, Ah used to get the bus.

MM: Is that right?

IK: Aye.

PA: Sometimes walk it but the money was a penny in the bus.

IK: Aye.

PA: Tuppence, penny.

MM: Great stuff.

Running time: 04.00

IK: And that would have been at Woodbush, of course? The school was at Woodbush at the time.

PA: Aye.

IK: The secondary school was at Woodbush, Peter, aye?

PA: Pardon?

IK: Woodbush was where the secondary school was.

PA: Woodbush, yes, aye, aye.

MM: I was interviewing another chap who'd been to secondary school there and he was telling me about the separate playgrounds for the boys and the girls...

PA: Yes.

MM: ...at the secondary school.

IK: Aye.

MM: Do you remember that?

PA: Aye, there was a big one as ye go down and ye go to the left an another big one, a quadrangle, down at the bottom.

MM: Right.

IK: Mm.

PA: An an entrance-.

IK: It was like that when I was at school in the sixties, separate boys and girls. Yea.

PA: In the right it was more or less like a big, well not a shed but another kinna classroom. Mr McAuley was the headmaster.

IK: Aye.

MM: Was he strict?

PA: Pardon?

MM: Was he strict?

PA: Oh, he was aw right if you were all right.

MM: Yes, indeed.

PA: Oh, aye.

MM: What age did ye leave secondary school, then?

PA: Be eleven.

MM: When ye left?

PA: Oh, Ah left fourteen.

MM: Fourteen.

PA: Fourteen.

MM: What did ye go on to do then?

PA: Ma father was ganger on the aerodromes an Ah got a job as a, he took me off school when Ah was fourteen, to make the men's tea.

MM: Is that right?

PA: So, Ah was a nipper, ye called it.

MM: Mm, mm.

PA: That's what he did, ye know.

IK: Mm.

MM: So, he was a ganger, would that be a foreman?

PA: A foreman, yes.

MM: Mm.

PA: He worked in the aerodrome at East Fortune.

IK: Aye, aye, and did your brother go to work there, as well, Peter.

PA: Pardon?

IK: Did your brother Davie go to work there too?

PA: Davie was younger.

IK: Aye.

PA: Davie learned his trade as a blacksmith.

IK: Oh yes, aye.

PA: At Belton Ford.

IK: Uhuh, aye.

PA: There was a blacksmith's shop there.

MM: Ok.

PA: Where Joe stays, ye know?

IK: Aye.

PA: You know, wee Joe.

IK: Aye.

PA: Well, there was a blacksmith's shop there.

IK: Yes.

PA: An a forge, Ah remember it fine...

MM: Goodness.

PA: ...the horses getting shod.

IK: Aye.

Running time: 06.00

PA: And the last one's called Baldy Thorburn.

IK: Aye.

MM: The blacksmith was called Baldy Thorburn?

PA: It wisnae because he was bald, but he was, his name was Archibald [*laughter*].

MM: Oh, right [*laughter*]. Brilliant.

PA: He had two sons in Dunbar, Thorburns.

IK: Oh, yes, aye, it's the Thorburns there. A right Dunbar name right enough, aye.

IK: About, An Ah remember ye telling me about the tree in West Barns, when...

PA: The what?

IK: ...the tree, in West Barns, it was planted when you were a laddie.

PA: The sea?

IK: The tree, you know, the big tree that's along there?

PA: On the green, there?

IK: Aye.

PA: Oh aye, uhuh...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...that was 1935.

IK: Aye.

PA: Silver Jubilee of Queen Mary and King George V.

MM: Right, ok.

PA: An it was planted in 1935, ye see now?

MM: Ah know, the height of it, indeed.

PA: It was a five-year-old cedar, Ah think it was a, Ah think it was an Algerian, aye it was a cedar, it's a cedar anyway.

MM: Yes, uhuh.

PA: An it was planted in 1935, by Mrs Hay of Belton...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...House.

MM: Ok.

PA: One of the gentry, you know?

MM: Mm.

PA: So, it was that height when that was planted in 1935.

MM: And you've watched it grow all these years. Isn't that wonderful?

PA: Sometimes Ah say to folk 'Ah can remember it being planted' and they look at me

[laughter].

PA: Dinna blame me, you know [*laughter*]. An [?] Lebanon cedar, it's cedar anyway.

IK: Aye.

MM: Yes, uhuh.

IK: Oh, it's a fine healthy big tree.

MM: Aye, it's beautiful, it really is.

PA: Some o the cedars, the cones dinnae drop for about thirty years.

MM: Ok.

PA: Ah'm no very sure that's on o them. No, Ah don't think.

IK: Oh right, aye.

PA: The cones stay up about thirty years before they drop.

MM: Goodness. Ah didn't actually know it was a cedar, actually.

IK: No, Ah just sort of, Ah knew it was some sort of conifer.

Running time: 08.00

MM: Yea.

PA: Ah remember the old village, the old village, was on that green. West Barns village was...

MM: Ok.

PA: ...on that. To have houses on there, a whole little town, when Ah was three-year-old.

MM: Ok.

IK: Oh, right.

PA: Ah stayed at the Trows at the time.

IK: Ah yes.

PA: Ye ken, second house up.

IK: Just across the road, there, aye.

PA: An they knocked the houses down and e used to pick up bits o firewood for the fire, you know.

IK: Aye.

PA: Aye, Ah remember it fae the houses aye.

MM: An you would go and take the wood after they'd taken the houses down.

PA: That's right, aye.

MM: Right.

PA: Ah was only three-year-old but get some bits o material.

IK: You remember doing that, Aye?

PA: Ah do.

IK: Aye. Very good.

MM: So, when you, how long were you a nipper for? For your dad?

PA: Oh, aboot a couple o years, Ah think. An then Ah worked as labourer...

MM: Right, ok.

PA: ...after that.

IK: At the aerodrome?

PA: Yea.

IK: You worked as a labourer at the aerodrome, Peter, aye.

PA: No, Ah left there.

IK: Ah, right.

MM: Ok.

PA: [?] a charge o a Dunfermline firm.

MM: Ok.

PA: The contract for laying the cables and we dug the trenches for the cables.

MM: Got ye, right. So, they were over here working, laying the cables, or did you go over to Dunfermline?

PA: No, we just dug trenches there.

MM: Right, aye.

IK: Here, aye.

PA: The cables are only aboot that depth, that depth down, the cables.

IK: An was that telephone cables or electric cables or-?

PA: Oh, it was for the aerodrome, Ah don't know.

IK: Oh, for the aerodrome, aye, aye.

MM: Right.

IK: Oh aye, they wouldnae tell ye what it was for.

PA: One o the big hangars is sort o facing south and north, well, there is a cable there which is no far off. Ah remember when we were diggin the trenches we came upon these old World War

Running time: 10.00

PA: bombs, you know.

MM: Aw goodness, yes.

PA: They used tae drop them from aeroplanes, mind?

MM: Aye, aye.

PA: They just put back in the trench again [*laughter*]. An Ah told the curator, at East Fortune, aboot that, Ah forget his name now. He's been here too.

MM: Mm.

PA: So, one o the bombs is still lying in the trench there.

MM: Still in there.

IK: [*laughs*], Oh dear.

MM: We'll know about that when it goes up then.

PA: It'd maybe be a dummy bomb though.

MM: Uhuh.

PA: Which during the war they dropped dummy bombs, you know.

IK: Yea, just for practice.

PA: To save money.

IK: Yea, target practice, yes.

PA: Aye.

IK: Aye, aye. So, did you go to the house in the Trows after you left Winterfield?

PA: Yes.

IK: Aye.

PA: But Ah can't really remember that.

IK: Aye. Well, no, ye'd be wee at the time, aye.

PA: Aye.

MM: Mm.

IK: Ah'm just remembering you telling me before about, ye didnae have electricity, did ye? In the house, was that right? Did I remember that right?

PA: What was that? A beg your pardon. The first house Ah was in, it was the second house Ah was in.

MM: Ok.

PA: The house along the road, there, you know where Sammy Cameron stays?

IK: No, Ah dinna, no.

PA: Well, ye know where the old houses start?

IK: Mm.

PA: There was a what de ye call it, the Red Row there.

IK: Oh, right.

PA: Well, you know the old houses up there?

IK: Ah thinks so, Ah think Ah know what you're talking about, aye.

PA: Aye. Ye ken, the row o cottages where they're aw different colours?

IK: Mm.

PA: Well, it yaist tae be the Red Row down the way, they called it.

IK: The Red Row. An how many houses were in that?

PA: Oh, there were upstairs and downstairs...

IK: Uhuh.

PA: ...and we stayed upstairs an we had a paraffin lamp...

IK: Uhuh.

PA: ...you know, and one o these tin baths, you know, for bathing [?].

MM: Oh, aye right.

PA: And yer paraffin lamp...

MM: Goodness.

PA: ...and ye had a wee coal fire.

IK: Aye, cosy [*laughs*].

MM: And would your mammy be cookin off a range

Running time: 12.00

MM: then?

PA: Pardon?

MM: Would your mum be cooking off a range?

PA: A wee range, aye.

MM: Aye.

PA: Aye. There wis two o us at the time, ended up, she ended up, she ended up there another six.

MM: Oh, ma word.

PA: Ah had six sisters an one brother.

MM: You've got six sisters.

PA: The sisters were always squablin, Ah never had a wrong word wi ma brother [*laughter*].

MM: No peace from those girls.

PA: You've got ma [?] on an tear each other's hair, ye know.

IK: Oh dear...

MM: Fantastic.

IK: ...never a dull moment, eh?

PA: They were always squacking at each other, ye now. Ma brother an I never had a wrong word in oor life.

MM: Nice and peaceful.

IK: Davie was a quiet man, though, Ah remember him.

PA: He wis, aye.

IK: Quite like yourself.

PA: He was a farrier.

IK: Aye, shoeing the horses.

PA: When the Queen yaist tae come to Edinburgh, you know the Co-operative horses?

IK: Aye.

PA: They used them, Davie used to shod them

MM: Is that right?

PA: Aye, he was a right farrier and then in later years people wi horses an ponies yaist tae come an get him an take him to do the job, you know.

IK: Yes.

PA: There's not many farriers going about now.

MM: There's not many now, at all. Not at all, it's not something you see very often is it?

IK: No, it's no. Well, Ah mean, every, it would have been, back in the day, every village would have had its backsmith...

PA: Aye.

IK: ...its farrier, yea. Because the horses were needed, yea.

MM: And did you labour for most of your life Peter, did you do labouring most of your life?

IK: No, Ah worked at the maltings as a maltsman.

MM: Ok.

PA: Then Ah was in the-?

IK: Just here in West Barns, yea. The maltings in West Barns.

PA: Aye, along the road, here.

MM: Ok. What does that involve? What did a maltsman do?

PA: What they did in the whisky distillery, they turned the barley.

MM: Ok.

PA: And they made malt extract.

MM: Right.

PA: You know, that liquid stuff.

IK: Mm.

MM: Mm.

PA: Made that.

IK: Ah.

PA: I was on that a while

Running time: 14.00

PA: working the kilns, you know. And dae ken ye called that? The drum system, huge drums and the barley grew inside and ye turned them, you know.

IK: Ah, yes.

MM: Ah've got ye.

PA: Instead o, in the old breweries, they done the malt on the floor and turned it, they used ta turn the big drums...

MM: Right.

PA: ...huge drums, ye know.

MM: Like a kinna tombola thing?

PA: Right round...

MM: Aye.

PA: ...as high as that, ye know.

IK: As high as the ceiling, aye.

IK: Wow.

PA: They used to [?] in the steep.

MM: An that was for whisky?

PA: Eh?

MM: Was this maltings for whisky.

PA: No, for malt extract.

MM: Oh, right, got ye.

PA: And the maltings made the, they dried the malt too and they had a sign on one of the buildings Purveyors of Malt to Queen, the Royal Family.

IK: Oh aye.

MM: Oh, by royal appointment.

PA: By royalty, they had a big sign, Ah don't know what happened tae it.

IK: Aye.

PA: It was burnt down in 1942.

IK: Oh really?

PA: But they rebuilt it.

IK: Uhuh, carried on production for a while.

MM: When would that business finish up here, then?

PA: Pardon?

MM: When would it all have finished up here, that business, the maltings?

PA: Oh, nineteen seventy something.

IK: Uhuh.

MM: Right, ok.

IK: But you worked latterly at the cement works, did ye no Peter, aye?

PA: Ah did, aye.

MM: At Portlands Cement?

IK: At Portlands, aye. Oh well, you've had a variety of different jobs.

PA: Och aye, well [?]. Well, Ah worked in Belhaven hospital too.

IK: Oh, did ye? Aye.

PA: Oh aye, Ah was porter and gardener there.

IK: Oh, aye.

PA: And Ah did the mortuary work too.

Running time: 16.00

IK: MM.

PA: Take the bodies, Ah used to take the bodies down to the mortuary, you know. There's a wee mortuary there, you know.

MM: OK.

PA: Aw the time, like, ye know, Ah did aw that too. It didnae bother me though.

IK: No, no..

PA: Ah even put ma mother-in-law in a coffin [?].

MM: Did you really?

PA: Mm.

MM: Goodness.

PA: Aye.

MM: Did you live here, all your life, in this area, Peter?

PA: Ah had a couple o years down south, ma father worked at aw the aerodromes.

MM: OK, yes, so did you go on the road at one point with him?

PA: [?].

IK: During the war years, wasn't it, you were?

PA: It was the war years...

IK: Yea.

PA: ...1943. Ma brother an I worked on the farm, tae get a house. Ma father worked in the aerodrome at Bibury, Bibury aerodrome.

IK: Ah, Ah see, aye.

PA: Ah got, oh Ah'll tell ye aboot this. Ah got work on the horses in the field, and this mosquito aircraft was coming right towards me. Thought it was gonna crash into me but the pilot must have saw me an he veered, an he crashed about two hundred yards away.

IK: Aye.

PA: So, Ah ran across, it went up in thousands o pieces, ye know...

MM: Aye.

PA: ...and looked around Sergeant Pilot, Canada on his shoulder...

MM: Goodness.

PA: ...and his head was split wide open, you know.

IK: Aye.

PA: And he sounded as though he was snoring, you know, and then he stopped. But Ah was lookin, there should be a, no the pilot, the, one that [?] the flights.

MM: Navigator.

PA: Navigator, Ah couldnae find him but they found him in a [?] later on, ye know.

IK: Oh, right, Ah see.

PA: But Ah'm sure he, the man, pilot swerved tae miss me because he was coming straight towards me.

IK: Really.

MM: What age were you then, Peter, about?

PA: Sixteen.

MM: Oh, my word

Running time: 18.00

MM: You'll no forget that ever, eh?

PA: No.

IK: No, what a terrible thing to witness, eh?

MM: Mm.

PA: Aye, he veered, of course he had the whole valley an went doon and then oh, like a big explosion, a thousand pieces.

MM: Smithereens.

PA: His head wis split wide open and like as if he was snoring, you know.

MM: Mm.

IK: Just his last breaths, Ah suppose, yea.

PA: [?].

MM: That's tragic. Isn't it? That's tragic.

IK: An then, of course, you've seen another plane crash, haven't you? Ah remember ye telling me about that before.

PA: Oh, at [John Muir] Park.

MM: There was a plane crash there?

IK: Well, he saw it from there.

PA: Saw it. Ma brother an I saw it. Ye'll have heard about it, have ye?

MM: No, no, not at all.

PA: On the top of the high road, you go up the road, there, this Beaufighter, two engines, was coming over Belhaven Bay, low. Ye ken, it was that low, an in the sands they had poles, in the sand to stop German planes landin. So, he couldnae land, you know.

IK: And this was, this was during the war as well, th-.

PA: Yes, in 1943.

IK: Aye.

PA: An my brother an I were on top o the hill, there...

IK: Aye.

PA: ... and it, have ye ever been to at Tynninghame, the place?

IK: Aye, aye.

PA: Ye ken, well if ye go straight, facing Dunbar...

IK: Yes.

PA: ...on the right-hand side there, just at, that's where the plane crashed.

IK: Right, aye.

MM: Goodness.

IK: On the Ravensheugh sands there?

PA: Eh?

IK: On the Ravensheugh Sands?

PA: No, no.

IK: It was, was it, no the Spike, the other bit. But-.

PA: No, if ye went doon tae Tynninghame Links...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...and ye parked the car down at the sea, the wide bit...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...on the right-hand side

Running time: 20.00

PA: the place crashed in there.

IK: Right. Right.

PA: Ye might see some char marks, charring on the trees yet.

MM: Ok.

PA: But Ah could see it was gonnae, it went on fire though, flames going up, the tress were burning, ye know.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ah've got the pilot's name, they'll tell ye at East Fortune.

IK: Aye.

MM: Mm.

PA: But in later years, Ah found half a propellor.

MM: Oh, did ye?

PA: And Ah gave it tae East Fortune. Ye know, if go in East Fortune Aerodrome, you'll see it was donated by Peter Aitchison.

MM: Oh, Ah'll need to go and have a look for that.

PA: Ken, they must have, Ah didnae realise that the plane had struck well below the water mark and the propeller must have come off and went into the woods. Half the propellor.

MM: And was it a good few years after the crash that you found that?

PA: Oh, 1990.

MM: Is that right? That's amazing.

PA: Aye, no long ago now.

IK: Yea.

PA: Ah had a red Beetle at the time.

IK: Aye, Ah remember ye had a red Beetle.

PA: That's what Ah had in 1990.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ah come along there an Ah saw it sticking oot the sand, ken, aboot twenty feet down fae the high-water mark. It must have broken off an ken.

IK: An ye would know what it was right away, when ye saw it, aye.

PA: Oh, right away.

IK: Aye, Aye.

PA: So, it's in the Museum in-

IK: At East Fortune, aye.

PA: Wi ma name on it, donated tae them.

IK: Mm, mm, yea. There ye go, aye.

MM: So, have you...sorry on you go.

PA: Ah saw another one at Charterhall Aerodrome in Berwickshire, saw another plane crashing one day [*laughter*].

MM: Ah'm spotting a theme here, Peter [*laughter*]

PA: It was single engine plane [?] can't remember the name of it. It had its wheels half down; it was a plane that should have been landing at East Fortune.

IK: Oh, Ah see.

PA: At East Fortune, it's the tarmac.

Running time: 22.00

IK: Ah right.

PA: At, the one at Charterhall's grass.

IK: Oh, aye.

PA: So, it must have diverted there and landed on the grass.

IK: Right.

PA: So, when it came doon the wheels, gonna land ye know, an he took off again, he must have lost courage.

IK: Aye.

PA: He tried it twice ye know.

IK: Aye.

PA: The third time he came down, grass dustin up in the air and it stopped. An he got oot the cockpit cause everything had aw been stopped an when he got oot the cockpit awbody cheered.

MM: Good.

IK: Yea.

PA: Another story Ah told, Ah was told the about East Fortune. The old steam rollers. The [?] were workin an this fella saying this plane came up and he thought it was gonna hit it, the road roller, the old steam roller. So, they aw dived an run aways an the wheels struck the top o the road roller and he said they kept goin [*laughter*]. Another true story eh?

MM: [*laughs*], that's fab.

PA: One o the staff there says there are about thirty plane crashes there, ye know, because some o the pilots, six weeks training, ye know.

IK: Aye.

MM: Not long.

PA: Aye, Ah know.

IK: Yes, just laddies, really, with a bit o derring-do and thinking they could do anything.

PA: Aye, an the same wi mechanics, six weeks training, ye know.

IK: Oh dear, ye wouldnae get away wi that nowadays.

PA: Air force engines are for, aw they could do was change oil, ye know [*laughter*].

IK: Aye, oh aye, six weeks is no time at all for looking after an aeroplane, really, is it?

PA: But, have ye been in the aerodrome.

IK: Ah huv, aye.

PA: Did ye see the aeroplane the man made himself? Hanging fae the roof?

IK: Aye.

PA: Sharp, that's ma cousin.

IK: Is that right, aye?

PA: Ah remember when he built it.

IK: Uhuh.

PA: Let me see, Ah think it was a French model, him and his brother

Running time: 24.00

PA: built it in a bedroom.

MM: Your brother?

IK: No, his cousin.

MM: Oh, his cousin, right, ok.

PA: Sharps, they ended up in Airdrie.

IK: Oh, right.

PA: Airdrie, aye, Sharp family. In the census the Sharp family used to be in Battlebent.

IK: Oh, Ah see, right.

PA: Have ye heard o the Sharp family?

IK: No, Ah don't think Ah have actually, no. Ah've known some Sharps in Dunbar but Ah don't think they're indigenous to the area.

PA: No.

IK: Aye, Aye. So, aye, Peter's got a big extended family in Dunbar. In fact he's probably related to at least half o Dunbar.

MM: Is that right? You're no denying it.

PA: Ah've lost count of the great child, the great-children and great-grandchildren. Ah think there's about fourteen o them Ah think.

MM: When did you get married, Peter?

PA: In 1956.

MM: Fifty-six. What was your wife's name?

PA: Elma.

MM: Elma.

PA: [?] That's her there.

MM: Oh lovely.

PA: She only died a few months ago.

IK: That's right, yes, a few months ago.

MM: Is that right, sorry to hear that. You'll miss her, you'll miss her.

IK: Although she was in Belhaven latterly, wasn't she, Peter, aye?

PA: She had Alzheimer's.

MM: Oh, that's sad.

PA: Ah know, an Ah've got it too.

MM: That's sad, that's not so good.

PA: Ah've got Alzheimer's as well.

MM: Did ye do all your romancing here, in Dunbar?

PA: Uhuh.

MM: Oh, lovely. How did you meet?

PA: The dentist [*laughter*].

MM: That's no so romantic. Ah can honestly say you're the first person that's said that for an answer [*laughs*].

PA: She was the receptionist.

MM: Aw, lovely, lovely. An were you courting a long time before you married?

Running time: 26.00

PA: Oh, Ah cannae remember now, to tell ye the truth.

IK: Aye.

PA: Five or six years maybe.

MM: Oh, goodness, that's a long time.

IK: It is a long time, aye.

MM: How many children did you have?

PA: Four.

MM: Lovely.

PA: Two boys and two girls.

MM: Very nice. And you'll have seen many changes over the years here in Dunbar?

PA: Aye.

IK: And West Barns particularly, yea.

MM: And West Barns, yea.

PA: The place is full o strangers now, you know.

MM: Not recognising so many?

PA: No, well Ah handful o West Barns folk.

MM: Is that right, big changes. Well, the likes of when they built the cement works and things would have brought a lot o new people into the area... as well.

PA: From Glasgow, yes, aye.

MM: ...as well.

PA: Aye.

IK: An then Torness, as well.

MM: Torness.

IK: Torness was a-.

PA: Ladies, before Ah forget, ye know the seawall at the pond at Belhaven?

IK: Aye.

PA: My ancestors built that.

IK: Oh aye.

PA: Ken the wall, you know, along there, they call it the [?] dykes.

IK: Aye, an-.

PA: The [?] dykes.

IK: What would, now, you told me something about the bricks, you told me a story about some-.

PA: Where the pond is.

IK: Aye. Oh, Ah mind what it was, you were saying that the bricks that were made here in West Barns...

PA: Yes.

IK: ...were used tae build one o the bridges?

PA: The road, yea.

IK: The Tay, was it the Tay?

PA: The Dundee bridge.

MM: The Tay.

IK: Aye, the Tay Bridge, yes.

PA: They used these bricks there.

IK: Uhuh.

PA: Mind they built it, the train collapsed.

MM: That's right, yes, uhuh.

PA: But the bricks didnae.

IK: Aye.

MM: Ah.

PA: Ah've got some o these bricks oot the back, same bricks.

MM: From West Bars, it's got West Barns written on them.

PA: No, it's got Sherriff on them.

IK: Sherriff, yae.

MM: OK.

IK: That's just across there, aye.

IK: Ah, see, I've seen those bricks with that on it and I didn't make the connection.

PA: Aye, they were made in Belhaven

MM: Got ye. Jings.

PA: But it was flooded in 1890 or something...

Running time: 28.00

IK: Mm, oh right.

PA: ...or before that. It was flooded, anyway.

IK: Yea, yea.

PA: Ah've seen it, they pumped it out in the 1950s.

IK: Aye.

PA: And down in the bottom there was they wee railways and hutches, ken for the blue clay, they made the bricks.

IK: Aye, aye.

PA: Aye. An if ye go along to Hedderwick, the wooden bridge, ye know?

IK: Yea.

PA: An ye go along the sand ye'll see a clay seam right, a blue clay?

IK: Yes.

PA: That's the same blue clay.

IK: Aye.

PA: Cause ah know the chap that makes-.

IK: Philip the potter, Ah've been with him when he's been down there, to collect clay, yes.

PA: Aye Ah told, Ah brought a bit o clay for him...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...and he made a pot, is it up there, a red one?

IK: No, there's just a bottle up there, Peter.

PA: He made a pot for me.

MM: How lovely.

PA: So, it's a seam.

MM: It's a seam of kinna blue clay, Ah'll need tae go and have a look.

PA: The same seam from the pond, ye know.

IK: Yes, aye.

PA: So, Philip, so Ah told him an he knew.

IK: Oh, aye, Philip knows where tae get the clay, aye.

PA: The clay, aye, so-.

IK: Thanks to yerself.

PA: Aye, thanks tae maself, oh aye, aye.

IK: Very good.

MM: That's very special. That sounds interesting.

IK: Yea. Ah was just thinking more about yer family, Ah remember, ye were saying that yer mum was a quiet woman but yer dad was wild.

PA: Ma mother was Irish.

IK: Oh, was she?

MM: Was she irish?

PA: Did ye not know?

IK: No, Ah didnae know that, no.

MM: Whereabouts in Ireland.

PA: Oh, she was Irish. Oh aye.

MM: Do you know whereabouts she was from?

PA: She was born in Achill Island.

MM: Is that right?

PA: Do you know where that is?

MM: Oh, Rathlin Island?

PA: Achill Island.

MM: Achill Island.

IK: Oh, Achill Island, Ah thought you were going to say in Rathlin Island because that's where-.

PA: Ah've been there, Ah've been there two or three times.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ah thought you knew that.

IK: No, Ah didnae, no. Well, maybe a did an Ah've forgotten.

PA: Aye, ma mother was awfy quiet, she would never loss her temper.

IK: Yea, yea.

MM: And where was your daddy from?

Running time: 30.00

PA: He was born in West Barns.

MM: Ok. A long history, here.

PA: Along the [?], along the road here.

IK: Oh aye, because you were saying that, that your ancestors, Aitchison ancestors were arrested for smuggling. So, the Aitchisons have been here a good long time.

PA: Ah saw that in the Courier.

IK: Aye, aye.

PA: 1600, it's maybe no the same Aitchisons, though, ye know.

IK: Well, I suppose, but there's a strong possibility that there's some connection, aye.

PA: Aye.

MM: And how did your mum and dad meet then? Do you know? Was mum over here working or-?

PA: Well, ma mum, an her sister, worked on the farm at South Belton.

MM: Right, that would be right.

PA: An they had a house there and they worked on the farm. So, ma father must have met her, ye know.

IK: Yes, fine.

PA: Then his pal, Sharp, ma mother's sister married this Sharp we were talkin about. It's his grandson had built the plane at East Fortune.

IK: Oh really?

PA: Aye.

IK: I see, aye yer cousin, yes, aye.

PA: Aye cousin. Him an his brother made it, made it up when they stayed in East Fortune, made it up in the house an took it outside an they flew it.

IK: Oh, great.

PA: [?], John and James Sharp.

IK: Right, yea.

PA: The Sharps were in, what dae ye caw the big house? Along the road again. Battleblent.

IK: Battleblent, yea.

PA: The Battleblent, aye.

IK: Yea, aye.

MM: Is that the big white one?

IK: Well, it's what was the Battleblent Hotel, it's basically that big house that's between Belhaven and West Barns.

MM: On the other side o the road.

IK: Yes, on the other side o the road beyond the primary school.

MM: It's kinna that kinna shape.

IK: Ah always used to think it looked like one o these sort of gothic horror...

Running time: 32.00

PA: Aye.

IK: ...you know, you could just imagine the thunder and lightning an it would be a haunted house, ye know.

PA: Aye. Battleblent, aye, it used tae be either a hotel or a pub.

IK: Aye, Ah remember that, aye.

IK: Goodness, Ah didn't know that.

PA: An the chap steys in Dunbar. What's his name again? Ye'll ken'im.

IK: No, I remember people talking about him when I first came to live in Dunbar, which is twenty-six years ago now, but I cannae mind the name.

PA: He's got a, his son's a gardener.

IK: Right.

PA: Who has a big van.

IK: Right. No Ah cannae think.

PA: No, nice van too.

IK: Aye, aye. Aye. Now, did you tell me once that your dad was a bit o a poacher?

PA: Yes.

IK: Aye, an got into some adventures.

PA: Uhuh.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ah got caught once wi him.

IK: Did ye?

MM: Did ye? What age were ye?

PA: Sixteen, Ah think.

IK: A teenager, anyway, aye.

MM: Young pup.

PA: Ah remember we had eight pheasants, nine pheasants in the bag. And it was up near the, ye come through this gate, you've got tae come through this gate, an here this policeman came running out. Of course, Ah ran away.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ma father got away but Ah didnae.

IK: Oh dear.

PA: The policeman struck me over the head with a baton.

IK: Oh dear.

PA: See the top o ma head.

MM: Oh, look at that.

IK: Oh, jeez Peter.

PA: Yea. Yea.

MM: That is-.

IK: He must have knocked ye out.

PA: Aye, oh aye. Glad he never.

IK: Dear, oh dear.

PA: Uhuh.

MM: What did Mum have to say about that?

PA: Never said anything.

IK: Well, she couldnae.

PA: She was that quiet.

Running time: 34.00

MM: Goodness.

PA: Ma father got away, what happened to me, ah had the bag nine pheasants on ma back, and he was off like a rocket wi nae pheasants [*laughs*].

MM: Goodness, gracious.

PA: So Ah went up to the court and ken, [?] and a lawyer standin aside me. An it was jist 'Stand aside' an got Ah got fined five pounds [*laughter*].

MM: Goodness, ye had tae go to court and everything, jeezo.

PA: Sherriff Middleton, the name, Sherriff Middleton.

MM: Where was the court, was that in Haddington or here?

PA: Aye the court, aye, ye know the big [?].

MM: It's still where it is, of course the court's gone now isn't it. They've-.

PA: Aye, the main entrance, ye went up there, in there.

IK: Aye, aye, the Sherriff Court, yea. Oh, Aye, great adventures, eh?

PA: Aye, so they are.

IK: But did your dad no get shot, or something, at some point when-.

PA: Who?

IK: Yer dad got shot, did he?

PA: No.

IK: Ah'm sure Ah remember you telling me he'd got shot.

PA: No, he never got shot.

IK: Oh, is that, Ah must be getting muddled up then.

PA: Aye.

IK: But, no, Ah seem to remember ye saying about yer mum had tae just get him up on the kitchen table an, Ah dunno, maybe it was fish hook or something, but Ah dunno, but he-. Ah remember ye saying about yer dad got into some sort of scrape an yer mum had tae do something to fix him, on the kitchen table.

PA: Oh, when he got drink he was a maniac.

IK: Aye.

MM: Is that right?

IK: In drink, yea.

PA: Took [?] gun out put in the cartridges, telt ma mother to look in the barrel and he was pulling the trigger and blowing the hell oot the walls, wi nae cartidges, ye know. A maniac in the drink.

IK: In the drink, yes.

PA: An we used tae wrestle wi the gun

Running time: 36.00

PA: barrell, ye know

MM: Mm.

PA: An Ah'd be maybe ten or eleven.

IK: Oh aye, ye shouldnae have tae witness things like that as a bairn.

PA: Ah know but when Ah was sixteen he came in drunk one day an ma mother gave him a plate o soup and he threw it up tae the ceiling. An Ah got a hold o him like that and threw him down onto the ground and he started crying 'Ma own son doing that tae me'. Ah thought tae masell, 'Oh here, what he did tae us over the years, it was-'. He was unbalanced though.

IK: Yes, yes, aye, well drink does that to some people.

MM: Did ye?

PA: He was always fighting, ye know, coming in wi battered face an...

IK: Oh dear, oh dear.

PA: ...fighting.

IK: Aye, yer poor mother.

PA: Ma mother was that quiet too.

IK: Yea, yer poor mother had aw that to put up wi.

PA: Eight o a family.

MM: It's a lot isn't it? No any washing machines in those days.

IK: No [*laughs*].

MM: Nothing.

PA: Aye.

MM: And where are your, aw yer sisters now? Are they all still alive?

PA: Well, one stays in Edinburgh.

MM: Ok.

PA: Marchmont.

MM: Very nice.

PA: She's got a big house there. And Moira stays in the...

IK: Moira's-.

PA: ...you know where Moira stays? In the lodge.

IK: Oh, is that where she is now? Aye, right.

PA: Ken where the big house, what de ye call it? The big house is in the grounds. Go up Belhaven Brae and the first big house on the right.

IK: Belhaven Brae, first big house -.

PA: Ye ken where Moira stays?

IK: Yes, oh the-.

PA: Well, the big house just-.

IK: Summerfield. Summerfield House.

PA: Summerfield House, aye aye.

IK: Aye, aye, yes.

PA: Aye.

IK: That's right, because she had the hotel there, for a while, didn't she?

PA: That's right.

MM: What hotel was that?

IK: The Summerfield Hotel, it was called the Summerfield Hotel wasn't it?

MM: Not there anymore, Ah take it?

IK: No, it's been a, gone for a lot o years, yea.

PA: Aye.

IK: And then didn't...

PA: It must be-.

IK: ... Morag, yer daughter Morag, and her man Billy

Running time: 38.00

IK: they ran the pub there for a while, didn't they?

PA: They did, aye. They did aye.

IK: Yea, yea, for a few years.

PA: Ma sister Moira had it before that.

IK: Yes.

PA: An her husband, Cyril, Cyril Lambrosavitch.

IK: Cyril Lambrosavitch.

PA: You ken [?].

IK: Ah know the girls, yes.

MM: Oh right.

PA: You know the girls.

IK: Yes, yes. Carmen and Lauren and Gaynor.

PA: Carmen, she's a painter, ye know.

MM: Oh, ok.

PA: Aye.

IK: And Lauren's very creative and crafty as well.

MM: She is, yes.

IK: She does, yea, yea. She's got so many brilliant ideas. And Gaynor, Gaynor's quite wacky too, she's an interesting lass.

PA: Poor daughter got killed though.

IK: Oh, Ah know, it was awful.

MM: Tragic.

IK: Mm. Terrible, terrible.

PA: Chap comin doon the wrong way on the road.

MM: Mm, very tragic.

IK: It shouldnae have happened.

PA: Oh dear me, ah cannae believe it.

MM: That A1's bad for that, though. Ah've seen it maself, coming doon...

IK: Aye, so have I.

MM: ...cars comin up the wrong way.

IK: Yes, and ye jist think 'Oh, thank God Ah wasnae overtaking at that point'.

MM: Mm, MM.

Pa: Ah well if yer not very well-acquainted which way.

MM: How long have you been in this house here, Peter?

PA: Since 1960.

MM: Goodness, that's a long time, then. I always admire these houses on the way past.

IK: So, you brought your family up here then, aye?

PA: Aye.

IK: Aye, because they're about ages wi me, Ah think, aye Ah think Morag's about the same age as me, mm.

PA: Morag was born 1960.

IK: Aye, born 1960, Ah was born, '58, yea.

PA: Mm.

IK: And Morag and Billy have got something like fifteen granddaughters and one grandson, is that right? There's a lot o them.

PA: Well, Ah've got so many great-granddaughters.

Running time: 40.00

IK: Yes, yes. And you've got aw the great-granddaughters, aye. Oh, this was, it was lovely-.

PA: There's one great-grandson.

IK: He's the youngest...

PA: The wee one.

IK: ...one, yes, [?]. At Elma's funeral, Ah couldnae get anywhere near Peter tae get a chat wi him because he was surrounded by all his young ladies, aw the great-grandchildren, an Ah mean

they're like steps aren't they? They're wee right up tae about nineteen or something. Aw the girls, yea.

PA: Aye.

IK: But they're obviously very fond o their great-grandpa.

PA: That's ma niece up there.

MM: In the wedding photograph or-.

PA: No, that's me on the left.

IK: This one.

PA: That's-.

MM: That's the lady that does-.

IK: Judith, the weather lady.

MM: Judith, the weather lady, is that your niece? You're just showing off now, are ye.

PA: She's ma sister Anne's lassie.

IK: She's lovely, aye.

MM: Lovely yea.

IK: Yes, she's a nice lass.

MM: So that's your, is that one of your sisters' girls or your brother's girl?

PA: Eh, She's one o ma sister's, youngest sister's...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...girl. Sister Anne's girl.

MM: Ann, ok. Lovely.

PA: She's the youngest.

MM: Lovely.

PA: They're all passed away now expect me and Moira.

IK: Moira, oh really.

MM: Just the two of you now.

IK: Ah remember when Davy died, right enough. That's a good long, a good number o years ago.

PA: That's Elma on the right there.

MM: Oh. Up here in the wedding photograph?

IK: Yes, that's Elma.

MM: Beautiful.

IK: And that's your son, is it? Yea, aye.

PA: Aye. No, actually that's Rebeca in the white.

IK: Oh, yes, aye, so it is, yes, Ah see her.

PA: An that's me on the left, Ah played the pipes for them.

MM: You look very suave, there, Peter.

PA: Aye.

MM: Very suave.

IK: Aye, Peter's, Peter's, Peter piper [*laughs*]. Peter piper picked a peck o pickled pepper.

PA: Ye ken, Elma getting Alzheimer's in that photie now too, you know.

MM: Mm.

PA: They've got me in ma first year of it, so they're slowing me down, ye know.

MM: Great.

Running time: 42:00

MM: Yea.

IK: Yea.

PA: They tell me it was too far gone, you know.

IK: Aye.

MM: Mm.

IK: Ah know there's great advances being made.

PA: Aye, cause about four years Ah kept her in the house, locked up, ye ken.

IK: Oh aye.

PA: Ken. And then one night she, Ah'd left the key in the back door, an she got out, she'd fallen in the street in Dunbar. Halfway Dunbar, ye ken.

IK: And she fell, didn't she?

MM: That's so scary.

PA: Ah thought she wouldnae get out, aw the doors locked, left the key in the back door. She was brave enough to get out, through the big door.

IK: Aye.

MM: Away.

IK: Aye, oh it's very difficult, very difficult.

MM: Did Elma work?

PA: She what ye call a greasy darner.

MM: A what?

PA: A greasy darner.

IK: A greasy darner?

MM: Well, that's a new one to me.

IK: No, Ah've never heard of it.

PA: She worked on the tweeds.

MM: On the weeds, ok.

PA: Tweed makers in the Borders.

IK: Oh right.

PA: Gibson and Lumgair was the name o the firm.

IK: Right.

PA: Made cloth but they had sometimes they had faulty threads in them.

IK: Ah yes.

PA: And the greasy darners put in the thread.

IK: I see.

PA: They had to get trained for that though.

IK: Aye.

PA: They get invisible mending, you know.

MM: Mm, Ah can imagine.

PA: Gibson and Lumgair's, in Selkirk or Galashiels.

MM: So, how would she get to her work, then? Did she drive or-

PA: No, they had a place in Dunbar, there.

MM: Oh, they had a place in Dunbar, right, ok.

PA: Aye, but they had tae go doon tae the college there, tae get taught, ye know.

MM: Mm.

PA: They had an old shack that used to up in the Winterfield Farm, they knocked it down. Dae ye mind o it?

IK: Ah don't Peter, no.

MM: That's where the shop was.

PA: Pardon.

MM: Was that where the shop was?

PA: That's where they worked.

MM: Oh, I'll have a look.

PA: Then they ended up in the old school too.

IK: Oh, aye, aye, yea.

Running time: 44.00

PA: That's how, Ah had a grey suit made out o the tweed.

IK: Oh, very nice.

PA: Burton made it for me, Ah taen in the cloth...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...an made a nice suit for me.

IK: Very nice, too.

PA: Got it [?], Ah'll no bother.

IK: You've still got it though, aye.

MM: You're being self-conscious?

PA: It's in the wardrobe there.

IK: Peter looks very smart in his kilt there doesn't he?

MM: He does, he does indeed.

PA: Ah played the bagpipes for North Berwick Pipe Band for...

MM: For North Berwick Pipe Band?

PA: ...for years. Aye.

MM: Did ye?

PA: There's a photograph in the-?

MM: Why North Berwick Pipe Band?

IK: Ah know, because Dunbar has a pipe band.

PA: Well, there's a territorial pipe band in Edinburgh too.

IK: Aye.

MM: Ok.

PA: So, Ah just went tae North Berwick, but Dunbar wisnae going very strong at the time.

MM: I see.

IK: I see, so ye jist kept going.

PA: North Berwick had a big band, ye know.

MM: So, did you go to any of the piping competitions?

PA: Oh, yes.

MM: Did ye go to the one, the Cowal games and things in Dunoon.

PA: Yes, Ah was there too, we never won anything, though. Ah've been there though, across the ferry, ye know.

MM: Mm.

PA: Greenock.

MM: Yes.

PA: Oh yes.

MM: That's where Ah'm from.

IK: Oh, is it? Aye.

MM: The Cowal games were always a big thing in our diary.

PA: Oh aye.

MM: We'd all go over on the boat, the Cowal Games.

PA: Funny, the last time Ah was there, this policeman came up, he's a local fellie, ken?

IK: Aye.

PA: Ah forgot his last name, it was in Greenock at the pier, ye know?

MM: Mm.

PA: Of course, the pipe bands played down, all the bands played down the street.

MM: Played right down and out the High Street, in Dunoon, it was a great sight.

PA: Of course, everybody was drunk.

MM: Ah wee bit [*laughter*].

IK: Aye.

MM: That was a big thing in the days wi the-.

PA: There was a kinna slope in the street too.

MM: Mm, it had a very gentle, and then what happened was they

Running time: 46.00

MM: introduced tha ban on drinkin in the street.

IK: Oh, aye.

MM: And that put the, that just put all that to an end.

IK: Oh, what a shame.

MM: But that was a great finale to those games, it was always fantastic...

IK: Yea.

MM: ...watching that march past.

IK: Well, they certainly, wherever there's pipers the drink's never far away, Ah've noticed this.

PA: An we yaist tae play, once we'd finished playing, The Chieftain's Salute...

MM: Mm.

PA: ...ken, aw the bands there. And now, they yaist tae say 'Now, we'll play Heilan Laddie'.

IK: Aye.

PA: So, either Heilan Laddie or something else. So, the man shouts, 'Play the Chieftain's Salute.' He never said what it was, ye want tae have heard this racket, [*laughter*].

IK: Everybody played a different tune.

PA: Well, what were we gonna play, we chanced it, true though, Heilan Laddie an the other one, ye know.

MM: Oh goodness.

PA: If anybody had of taped that, ye know. True story though.

MM: I like that.

IK: But, when Peter got to the stage where he didnae have the puff to play the pipes, the family got him electronic pipes. So ye can still play them, eh?

PA: No, Ah got them masel.

IK: Oh, did ye, Ah though ye said the family got it for ye.

PA: Oh, no, no, no.

IK: Ah right.

MM: Ah've never even heard of such a thing.

IK: Aye.

MM: It's in the drawer there, dae ye want tae see it?

MM: Aye, Ah'll see it, dae ye want me tae get them out for ye?

PA: Aye.

IK: I'll et ye in.

MM: Do you want to get it out. Sorry, just because you're nearer.

IK: Maybe Ah'll have a better idea what Ah'm looking for, Maggie.

MM: Aye, you know the house better.

IK: Oh yes...

PA: It's comin up.

IK: Aye, it's in this Christmassy bag is this it?

PA: Aye, that's it.

IK: Oh, look at that.

MM: Oh, look at that, goodness. That's space-age looking isn't it?

IK: This is a chanter.

MM: Are ye gonna play us a wee tune?

IK: It's maybe needin charged up.

Running time: 48.00

MM: Ah donno.

IK: Oh no.

PA: Oh, a wee bit life in it [*Peter plays part of The Rowan Tree on the electronic pipes*] [*applause*].

MM: Well done you, Ah've never seen such a thing in my entire life, Peter. Thanks so much.

PA: The Canadian invention.

MM: Isn't that great.

IK: Is that so.

PA: Aye, fine for practicing though.

MM: Yea, for sure.

PA: And it's a [a] battery in it.

MM: Mm.

PA: An ye can charge it.

MM: So, you can charge it up then.

IK: Plug it in and charge it, aye. Yes, ye jist, it's one o these things ye just never forget how to do.

MM: Your fingers are very nimble on it there.

IK: Aye, yes.

PA: Aye, aye.

IK: Yes, indeed. Getting aw the grace notes.

PA: But ye forget it aw, ye know.

IK: Aye, aye, ye do. Aye.

PA: Aye.

IK: Well Ah know the Alzheimer's does get ye, Ah mean, yes. Ma dad was always quite an artist. He would draw and catch people's likeness but, when he got dementia, he just couldnae, he couldnae do it any more. It's like the wiring had all gone.

PA: Well, Ah git kinnae absent-minded now, you know.

IK: Aye.

PA: If anything, Ah've had Alzheimer's for a year or two years now, you know.

IK: Aye. It's your short, your short-term memory's gone.

PA: Ah've got this thing that's slowing it down, ye know.

MM: Mm.

IK: Mm, aye, but yer no, oh yer long-term memories are fine [*laughs*].

PA: Aye, mm.

IK: Yes.

MM: What's the biggest change you see in the area, Peter.

PA: Biggest change?

MM: Mm.

Running time: 50.00

PA: Ah see the people in the village.

IK: Mm.

MM: Aye.

IK: Aye.

MM: Would the village's [?] been a lot smaller in your day?

PA: Yaist to be, well the old houses up there. And then there were the Red Row, then there was houses on the village green.

IK: Aye.

PA: On the village green.

IK: You'll remember when the council houses were being built then, I suppose.

PA: Ah do, aye.

IK: Yes, of course. About 1935.

IK: Aye, there ye go. Aye, cause they're all pre-war council houses these one, yes.

PA: Yes.

MM: And did you go to the cinemas and that here when there was two picture houses in the High Street here, is that right?

PA: Aye, there was the Playhouse, that's where the auld surgery was...

IK: Mm.

PA: ... and doon the High Street was a gap...

MM: That's right.

PA: ...that's where the Playhouse-

IK: Aye, aye.

PA: The cheap seats were fourpence Ah think, or ninepence, at the front, but some o them had no backs on them, you know.

IK: Aye.

PA: The first three rows, ken it was an the, often the films were breaking down and the crowd were 'Grrrrr'. It was always breaking down, you know.

MM: Would you go to the pictured then, maybe once a week or something.

PA: Aye, once a week.

MM: At a weekend or during the week.

PA: The cheap seats Ah think were just a few pence.

IK: Ah mind o people in Dundee telling me ye could get into the cinema wi a jam jar.

MM: Going in wi jam jars, Ah remember hearing.

IK: Ah love it [*laughter*]. Did they do that in Dunbar, Peter? Get in wi a jam jar, really?

PA: Well, ye yaist tae get money on the jam jars.

IK: Aye, aye.

Running time: 52.00

PA: Well, Ah didnae do it but some o them did. Went roon tae the back and take some jam jars off the-.

MM: And just go in the front door wi them?

IK: Aye, that's a fly move.

PA: Ah remember a story, remember the story, Jakey, Jackie Woods, ye wouldnae, the policeman came to the door one day, must be doing a survey or something, an Jackie, Jackie, he had been stealing jam jars and this 'Oh it wisnae me.' [*laughter*]. So, Ah heard, anyway.

IK: That's aye what they say.

PA: Guilty conscience.

MM: Aye.

IK: Before he even hears what he's been accused of he just says 'It wisnae me.'

PA: Dae ye know Nancy Miller along the road there?

IK: No, Ah don't.

PA: Dae ye no? She's a son, stays in the village.

IK: OK.

PA: You know where Mary Miller.

IK: Aye, aye. Oh Kenny Miller, aye, Ah know Kenny.

PA: She passed away no long ago.

IK: That's right, it feels like about a year and a half ago.

PA: Well, his mother, Mrs Miller...

IK: Right.

PA: ...she went tae school wi me.

IK: Ah right.

PA: Aye. And her father was Davy Lindsey.

IK: Uhuh.

PA: We had a cobbler in the school down, in the store.

IK: In the village, aye.

PA: Ah was walking along the road, one day, an Ah says his father was a cobbler, aye? That windae on the top there, the right-hand side.

IK: Mm.

PA: The cobbler.

IK: Oh right.

PA: Then he got a part-time job as a light keeper.

IK: Aye.

PA: At-

IK: Barnes Ness?

PA: Mm.

IK: Ah right, aye.

PA: What de call the one at Dunbar, there?

MM: Barnes Ness.

IK: Barns Ness, Barns Ness lighthouse, Aye.

PA: No, no it wisnae Barns Ness.

IK: No?

PA: No, no.

IK: Oh, Ah don't know of any other lights, then. Light keeper, well, a mean a light keeper, ye work at a lighthouse? Yea.

PA: Aye, the lightkeeper's

Running time: 54.00

PA: Barns Ness.

IK: Aye, Barns Ness, that's what Ah'm saying, aye, aye.

PA: Aye.

IK: Yea, because Ah couldnae think I any-.

PA: Eventually the lightkeeper there.

IK: Ah think we're tiring ye oot, a bit here, Peter, aren't we. Getting-.

PA: No, no. ye're refreshing me.

IK: Aye, ye're enjoying it good.

PA: But the big lad in the village, married to the lassie Miller, tall fella, what's his name again? Oh, Ah forget his name.

IK: Aye, that's what happens ye forget names isn't it, ye forget.

PA: He's married tae a lassie Lindsay.

IK: So, any other prompts we can think of?

MM: No silence is good as well, don't worry about it.

IK: Yea.

MM: Don't worry about it, don't worry about it at all. I'm just really interested in what the changes you see, Ah know you see, you were saying the amount of people that are different but Ah mean are ye out in the, Ah don't suppose you're out in the High Street very much anymore. But Ah mean, I've been interviewing other people an Ah'm always really amazed when they tell me about all the different shops that were on Dunbar High Street...

PA: Yes.

MM: ...compared to what's there now.

PA: Ah know, Aye.

MM: An it's sounds to me, previously, that Dunbar was really self-sustaining.

IK: Aye.

PA: Aye.

MM: It had absolutely everything you wanted in that...

PA: Oh yes.

MM: ...in that High Street.

PA: Oh aye.

MM: Can you remember it like that, Peter?

PA: Ah do, aye. There was Purves' shop, the bit next door tae me, the pub, that was Purves' shop.

MM: Oh, goodness, what did that sell?

PA: Pardon?

MM: What would that have sold?

IK: Jist about, groceries.

PA: After the pub.

IK: Aye it would be just like a, you would get all yer groceries in the shop there, aye.

PA: At one time ye got the drink too.

IK: Oh right, aye, uhuh.

PA: Beer. When ma grandfather stayed in Senton Road.

IK: Oh right, aye.

Running time: 56.00

PA: Ma granny yaist tae send me down to the shop, Purves' shop, an get a couple o heavy dubs for ma grandfather.

MM: What's that?

PA: Heavy dubs were wee heavies.

IK: Oh right, the wee heavy beer.

PA: Ah mean ah wis jist a laddie, tae.

MM: A pint o heavy.

PA: Ye, ken naebody bothered

IK: Yea.

PA: Yea ken, the wee bottles?

MM: Mm.

PA: [?], Fowler's Wee Heavies.

IK: Yes, yes, aye Ah remember them.

PA: Gie me a wee couple o heavies for ma grandfather, ken. But ye couldnae do that now.

IK: No, no, you have to be eighteen before ye can buy drink, aye.

PA: Think nothing of it

IK: Mm. It's the same, I remember kids being sent tae get their parents fags when they were eight or whatever, ye're couldn't, yer no allowed tae sell cigarettes to people under sixteen now.

PA: Well, ma Granny Aitchison, she'd been a widow too...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...her first man was drowned at sea in 1900...

IK: Oh, really, aye.

PA: ...And he was called Aitchison too.

IK: Oh, seriously.

MM: What, he was drowned at sea here?

PA: Pardon?

MM: Was he drowned at sea here?

IK: In Dunbar, jist.

PA: Along bi [Skole?].

MM: Where, sorry?

PA: Along bi [Skole?] rocks.

MM: Oh, [Skole?], Ah know where you are, yes, uhuh.

PA: The boat...

MM: Had he been fishing?

PA: ...the boat overturned and three men were drowned.

IK: Bob [?]'s father, mind ae Bob?

PA: Fisherman.

IK: Right.

MM: They were fishermen, were there.

PA: [?].

IK: And did yer granny have any kids at the time, tae her first man.

PA: No, no.

IK: No. Right aye, so-.

PA: No, she married ma grandfather and different ages.

IK: Yea, yea. But had she had kids wi the first Aitchison it wouldna really have mattered. They would aw still have been Aitchisons.

PA: Aye. But she yaist tae sit wi a magnifying glass at the paper.

IK: Aye.

PA: It wisnae till later years ma granny told me, that ma Auntie Jean told me, she was illiterate, she couldnae read or right.

MM: Aw, [?].

IK: Oh goodness.

PA: So, why she was doing that. Pretending

Running time: 58.00

PA: trying to-.

IK: Oh right.

PA: Her mother was a notorious woman, ye know.

IK: Aye.

PA: Must have had so many men, ye know.

MM: Oh, right.

PA: One o the Earls o Haddington Ah think, so maybe we've got blue blood, ye know.

MM: Ye never know. So, how, so your granny's first husband died tragically in a fishing boat accident.

PA: About 1900 or something.

IK: Aye, aye.

MM: And would there have been a lifeboat in Dunbar in those day? When did...

PA: Oh yes.

MM: ...Dunbar first ever have its lifeboat.

IK: Oh aye, there was always a lifeboat, there's always been a lifeboat from away back, yes.

PA: Aye, away back tae 1840, wis it?

MM: Is that right?

PA: Well, well over then.

MM: Maybe one of the first ones, then, Dunbar, is it?

IK: I wouldnae be surprised. Ye see, the Volunteer, ye know the Volunteer pub, the Volunteer Arms.

MM: Uhuh.

IK: You see the fellow wi the, the picture wi the fellow wi the cork lifebelt on, aye.

PA: An they yaist tae tow the lifeboat wi big wheels.

IK: Aye, yea.

PA: Hiv ye seen the photograph?

IK: Ah've seen photos, yes.

PA: These big wheels stood at the chimney pots for years, the chimneys.

IK: At the maltings?

PA: Eh?

IK: At the maltings, the chimney pots...

PA: The maltings.

IK: ...at the maltings, aye.

PA: An they had bronze tread on them.

MM: Is that right?

PA: An Ah went to the town council, telling them about it. Ye want tae get these wheels because they've been there for donkey's years.

IK: Yes.

PA: They didnae bother.

IK: Aye.

PA: An ... the manager there sold them for scrap.

IK: Aye.

PA: Pair o big bronze thingamies. And the town council could have had them.

IK: Yes.

PA: An Ah warned them, an Ah still think about that yet.

IK: Aye, aye, yes.

PA: Same wi the,

Running time: 60.00

PA: doon at the old harbour they had the Custom's House. The Custom's House is just doon the old harbour, they knocked it down to save money on the rates.

MM: Oh, that's tragic.

PA: Anyway, I appealed to them too an that, trying to save money.

MM: These things you don't get back, do ye.

IK: Ah remember when Ah was over in Rabbie Burns' country, an ye know the wee bridge that goes over the river there, that was made famous in Tam o Shanter?

PA: Aye.

IK: An it's a beautiful old semi-circular stone bridge and apparently there was moves afoot to demolish that, ye know. Ah dunno, back in the sixties or something? So, there was, there had to be a big campaign to prevent it and, of course, it's one o their biggest, major tourist attractions now.

MM: Indeed.

IK: Yes, Ah know, the short-sightedness o people it just makes you despair.

MM: Yea.

PA: Aye, Ah know, save money.

IK: Aye.

MM: Indeed. When we came here today, [*I'm just looking at the time*]. When we came here today...

IK: [*Aye, it's ten past three.*]

MM: ...Isabel mentioned that you were really quite an outdoorsy person.

PA: Uhuh.

MM: What did ye like doing? Was it walking or-.

PA: Bird watching, aye.

MM: Birdwatching, is that right?

PA: Oh, aye.

MM: All kinna local round here?

PA: Uhuh.

IK: Aye, ye would often see Peter striding along to John Muir Park wi binoculars...

PA: Aye.

IK: ...and ye would drive past him.

MM: What would be your favourite to see?

PA: Favourite?

IK: Birds. What was it you would see out there at, at, well you would see all the wading birds, I imagine?

PA: Oh aye. Ah see the birds, of course [*laughter*].

MM: Of course, we'll talk about the feathered ones just now though [*laughs*]. Ah like it.

PA: Not really just said that as a quip there. Ah wouldnae let it happen.

IK: No, ye werenae.

Running time: 62.00

IK: Peter, no.

MM: So, would ye have a favourite bird that come in that you'd like to see.

PA: Ah liked to see a pheasant.

MM: Ah'm surprised...

IK: That's no a wadin bird [*laughter*].

MM: ...after your history.

IK: Ah know, aye.

MM: A'm surprised after your poachin history that they'd be your favourite.

PA: Oh, aye, Ah used tae go duck shooting too.

IK: Aye, aye.

MM: Oh, did ye?

PA: You know the strangest thing that happened had tae be wi ma gun. It came on snow, drizzle, it was hissing, at the end o the gun barrel, there was lightning coming off it.

IK: Oh no.

PA: Put the gun down, thought the cartridge was gonna explode.

MM: Aye.

PA: Ah discovered the next day, same thing had happened tae wildfowlers down at Northumberland.

IK: Aye?

PA: Electricity in the air...

MM: Imagine that.

PA: ...St Elmo's Fire.

IK: Right.

PA: Have ye heard o that?

IK: No, Ah've not.

MM: [?].

PA: The ships' mastheads often, the electricity and the seamen called it St Elmo's Fire, superstitious, you know. No. It's electricity in the air, this happened to ma gun barrel.

MM: Wow.

PA: Ah put the gun down ye know. Ah read in the paper the next day it happened down in Northumber-, Bamburgh Castle way.

IK: Oh aye, aye.

PA: And [?]'s the same thing.

IK: Oh yea.

PA: Electricity in the air.

IK: Ah've never heard o that.

PA: Have ye no?

IK: Nut.

IK: So there, of course when the hot air meets the cold air...

MM: Mm.

IK: ...all sorts of weird things happen.

PA: The ships on St Elmo's Fire, ken the metal, it's the sparks. And, of course, the crews were superstitious...

IK: of course.

PA: ... that's what it was, it was the electricity in the air.

MM: Good grief.

PA: St Elmo'S Fire.

MM: Well, that's definitely a first for ma interviews as well, Peter.

IK: Aye, aye.

Running time: 64.00

PA: An a once saw Will o the Wisp.

MM: Did ye?

IK: Oh.

PA: Ye ken about Will o the Wisp?

MM: Aye, where was that?

PA: Down at Tynninghame, out poaching wi ma father one night.

IK: But ye didnae get caught that time.

PA: As you're going down to Tynninghame links, ken, on the left is a boggy bit?

IK: Aye.

PA: Like a bog.

IK: Aye.

PA: An this light was flashing.

IK: Right.

PA: It's something to do with gases somehow.

IK: Right.

PA: Ye call it will o the Wisp.

IK: Yes.

PA: Ah seen that.

IK: So, what causes that phenomenon, then? As you say it's gases.

PA: Gases comin, they must be igniting or something.

IK: Aye, aye.

PA: But ma father said that the only strangest thing that he saw was this tree that was shaking itself.

IK: A tree?

PA: A tree, Ah ken what it was, it's an Aspen.

IK: Aye, Aspen's shiver, yes.

PA: They shiver.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ah've seen it ken, the leaves an they all suddenly go like that. He says the tree, what de ye caw it?

PA: The Aspen, aye. Jesus' cross was made out o Aspen, supposed tae be.

MM: Oh, I see...

PA: Supposed to be.

MM: ... is that the legend there?

PA: Ye ken and in superstitious times, say that that's what it was.

MM: That's fascinating.

PA: Strangest thing ma father saw, he said was that. But he asked me tae caw it the shaking, the what de ye call it again?

IK: Shiverin, the Aspen's shiver.

PA: The shiverin Aspen, yes.

IK: Yes, aye.

MM: The shivering Aspen.

IK: Ah've seen a shiverin Aspen.

PA: No everybody kens that.

IK: You can go up to the branches and you know, if ye just give them a wee tap, then they'll do that yea.

PA: When ma father was quiet and peaceful [?] ye didnae ken any better.

PA: It was one of the strangest things he ever saw.

IK: Aye, because he just does it, there's no wind.

MM: There's no wind, yea, gosh, Ah've never even heard of that.

Running time: 66.00

PA: Most dangerous time he ever had was in the field wi a cow...

IK: Oh right, aye.

PA: ...an a calf in the dark.

IK: Uhuh. Is this when you're oot poaching?

PA: Started down at Tynninghame so he started running he says, an round at Tynninghame there's a metal fences, and he ran against this and he had a black and blue thigh and went over the top because the coo was efter im.

MM: My word.

IK: Yes, that's what we're saying aw theses adventuress wi the poaching eh?

PA: You're tellin me, aye. Well doon the Tyne, ye ken the footbridge?

IK: Aye.

PA: Tae stop ye fae going over, have ye been up at it? It's got spikes on it so ye cannae get over.

MM: Yes, it does, yes.

IK: Oh yes, aye. Up that-.

PA: We used to go down there and round it to go poachin.

IK: Aye.

PA: Ken, Ah was twelve- or fourteen-year-old.

MM: So, who then, now I'm just trying to figure out in my head, who, then would be the rightful owners of these pheasants and ducks? Who would that be, would that be a Grey or Dale or-.

PA: Well, the pheasants on the land belonged to the landlord, the Earl o Haddington.

MM: Earl of Haddington, ok.

IK: Oh, aye, aye.

PA: On the land, aye. But the ducks ye could shoot them, and ye're right in Scotland the right to shoot wildfowl, between the high water mark and the low water mark...

MM: Ok.

PA: ...not above it.

IK: Aye.

PA: Uhuh.

MM: So, did you have a gun, then, all your life, then Peter?

PA: Oh aye, yes, aye. Well, most of ma life.

MM: And would that always have to be registered, Ah know in these days, that it had.

PA: In the old days you paid ten bob a licence, or seven and six was it? And now you don't pay a licence.

MM: Ah think they're quite strict, well, Ah think they're quite strict now about who can get a gun in the first place, now.

PA: That's right.

MM: Ah think so.

PA: Ah know.

MM: So, there would have been a licence for that and a licence to have a dog

Running time: 68:00

MM: in those days, as well.

IK: Oh yes, of course, ah remember dog licences.

PA: Ye dinnae have licences for dogs now at all.

MM: They're talking about bringing it back.

PA: It was seven and six, Ah think.

MM: They're talking about it.

PA: They should licence cats though. What a damage they do to birds.

IK: Yes, that's true, aye.

PA: They kill millions o birds every year. Ken, when a come oot and [?] ma gun [*whistling noise*], they're off like a rocket [*laughter*].

MM: So, has this house got a wee garden at the back, then?

IK: It's got a big garden at the back.

MM: Oh, has it?

IK: Oh, aye.

PA: Ye can go and have a look if ye like.

MM: So, do you get your birds comin in there:

PA: Oh, aye. There's an orchard there.

MM: Is that right? Goodness.

IK: It's no that long ago that Peter was still using his chain saw in the back there. Aye.

PA: True.

IK: Oh, there's, it's like a museum out the back there actually, isn't it? You were showing me one time, ye've got bits of o old farming equipment out there, haven't ye?

PA: On the walls, aye.

IK: Aye, on the walls, yea.

PA: Aye. Ah notice, in the pend, Ah had a big shepherd's cutters, ken what Ah mean?

IK: For shearing the sheep.

PA: Like the old-fashioned yins. Ah had them hanging on the wall and they've gone. So, somebody's nicked it.

IK: Oh, have they?

PA: Oh aye.

IK: But ye've got that pend aw locked up.

PA: Aye, but folk come oot and in tae it, the coalman used tae come in...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...and other people come in...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...at times ye know.

MM: That's a shame, that's a shame.

IK: Nothing's sacred.

PA: No.

IK: Aye.

MM: Peter, Ah'm gonna stop the recording just now for today, is that all right?

PA: Aye, of course, yes.

MM: Is that ok? Anything else you want to fit in before we go today? But Ah'd love to come back and chat some more if that's ok.

Running time: 70.00

PA: Ah remember the 1948 floods...

MM: Oh, right.

IK: Oh aye.

PA: ...in the village and through the bridge there the water stretched as Beltonford.

IK: Wow.

MM: Goodness.

PA: It was like a big lake. And Boyd had horses...

IK: Aye.

PA: ...he had to let them out.

IK: Yes.

PA: One or two landed, some of them had come doon the burn, feet up in the air...

MM: Oh no.

IK: Oh, dear.

PA: ...he got, in the land at Belhaven [?] came through underneath the bridge, wi their hooves up, ken, an then there was another one over in the field standing. Trying tae get back to the stables [?].

IK: Aye, cause the stables would be-.

PA: 1948 floods.

MM: 1948.

IK: Oh, jings, aye.

PA: In Berwickshire too, trouble wi railways collapsing.

MM: Right, right. That's interesting, isn't it?

PA: Go from here to the bridge at Beltonford was one big lake, brown water.

IK: Jeez, that must have been some rain to cause that.

MM: An did your house flood?

PA: Well, Ah wisnae in here.

MM: Ye wernae here then, of course.

PA: There's a history of flooding.

IK: Yes.

PA: See the houses, the wee houses down there have got stone slabs on the floor.

MM: Aye, aye.

PA: Used tae be in here.

MM: Big flagstone kinna things.

PA: So, once Ah came in Ah took them oot an that was it, an what did Ah do, put wooden floors in here. Aye the two cottages down there are still stone.

IK: Flagstones, aye, aye.

PA: Caithness stones Ah think, Ah think so.

MM: Cost ye an arm an a leg these days for a Caithness stone floor.

IK: Yes, indeed.

PA: Aye.

MM: Lovely. Peter, thanks very much for your time today. Maybe we could do it again some time?

IK: Oh, yes.

MM: Ah hope ye enjoyed it.

PA: Oh aye.

MM: Good stuff.

IK: He likes a good blether, does Peter.

MM: well, don't we all.

IK: Don't we all.

MM: Ok.

Running time: 72.00