

Interviewee(s): David Chalmers (DC)	Interviewer(s): Melanie Chalmers Gibson (MC)
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REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Ballencrief

TITLE	<i>David Chalmers interviewed at Lochhill by his daughter Melanie Chalmers Gibson</i>
REGION	<i>East Lothian</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Farm life; family life; and social life.</i>
COUNTY	<i>East Lothian</i>
TOWN	<i>Longniddry</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>8 June 2019</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Melanie Chalmers Gibson</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>2019</i>
SUMMARY	<i>David describes coming to Lochhill and taking on the task of designing the garden and using the talents of the advisors from the [agricultural?] college to place the plants while they took a break from examining his vegetables. The garden was open to the public under the Scottish Garden scheme. He was also interested in conservation and planted many trees around the farm to shelter the fields and provide cover for wildlife. David then tells of the cabbage case when he struggled with getting compensation from a seed firm who had supplied the wrong type of cabbage seed. In an interesting aside he tells of Lord Wymess going to the Gullane Gentlemen's Club to talk about the art of Gosford House. Finally David tells of travelling on the Flying Scotsman just after the Second World War to visit his uncle and grandparents in London and the lovely garden at their house in Lambeth which contrasted with the ruins over the road.</i>

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MCG: So here we are on, we're now on June the 8th just Dad and I we're fortunate enough to get you in the house on the Saturday because cricket's cancelled cos it's rained off. So grabbing this moment to pick up where we left off the last time when we we're just chatting a little bit about Willy Mowat and, and the link with, with Lord Wymess and stories around that time, but what came to mind at the, that time was wonderful person from my childhood Mr Wallace from Longniddry and the gardening link. So it would be interesting to think about what was the garden here like at Lochhill when you came to Lochhill.

DC: Well the previous farmer wasn't really keen on gardening and, but there was a lot o' scope with the walled garden and several of the kinda layout of the garden being on a slope laid itself out quite well to trying to design it and, and, and refurbish it all and it was quite fortunate that at that time one of the best friends I had in Longniddry was Jim Wallace, who

was the college advisor and he also wrote the weeks gardening in the Scotsman every Saturday, and he was a big help in trying to keep me right as far as, because it was a new thing, lot o' the plants were new to me altogether. So we set about replanting the whole garden and...

MCG: Did he sort of inspire you with that. Did you just meet him from being in the village?

DC: Well he was the college advisor for the vegetables and it was in speaking to him that I got to know more about the plants and names of plants and the gardening. I'd always been interested in gardening, but he kept, he, he did give me quite a lot of help in...

MCG: Oh right.

MCG: Laying it out and, yeah.

DC: Laying the whole thing out and trying to keep the right plants and everything like that. And so I set about setting up the whole diversity in the garden of herbaceous plants, of fruit trees and rockeries. And trees as well which were important because we had planted thousands of trees across Lochhill over the years and it was always something that we enjoyed doing was, you know, looking after trees and plants and shrubs. So I designed the garden round that and, in fact, it was quite interesting that when I was busy building the rockery and some o' the bits up the back, some of the bits of the garden. It was at that time we had the college did vegetable trials on the field beside the house here. And I was quite fortunate when I went round I was speaking to the advisors at the time when I said, 'I've, I've just taken a load of plants from Maryfield Nursery across in Leslie in Fife.' And they said 'Oh, we're just stopping for coffee we'll come round and see what you've got.' And I can still remember to this day they came round and they were standing where I had laid out the rockery up the back of the house and they were looking at all the diff, the load of plants that I had taken delivery of. And at that time there was, amongst them was Tom Shearer who was on the Beechgrove Garden Roadshow; Marshal Morrison who was president of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society; Ben Barret who was the BBC gardening correspondent; and Jim Wallace who did the article in the Scotsman for the gardening every weekend. And they were all standing there and I can still remember them standing with these plants sort of arguing whether they should put this thing here or that thing there. And, and I'm stand, and they're put, and, and they were laying the plants down and then one would say 'No I wouldn't put that there, put that across here, oh no that should go here and that should go there'. And I've often thought since then could I have ever got all the expert gardeners in Scotland to come along in one time arguing about whether to put the plants in this garden and, but it did give me a great kick and a boost

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to see, you know, all the advice that they could give. But I was very fortunate at that time that also I knew the, Peter Wing who was the rep for the seed firm that we got all our vegetable seed from, who came from York, and he was able to put me in touch with one or two nurse's down in Yorkshire and down south who supplied and that's where I bought all the roses that I put in the front the garden I put 200 hundred roses in front of the house and I got them from Elikra Nurseries down south and I got fruit trees from down in Gloucestershire, Frank Mathews, and planted 100 fruit trees in the walled garden and it, and then we planted all the herbaceous border up and I got the plants for that from Morries at Dundee, a nursery at Dundee and, and it, it, it sparked off a real interest. And it was at, after a few years that the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society came down one evening for a visit, they asked if they

could come and visit the garden, and it was from that that I was approached by the Scotland's Garden Scheme who wondered if I would be interested in opening the garden to the public under that scheme and.

MCG: No! Oh really.

MCG: What year was that Dad?

DC: That was in the 1980's.

MCG: Was it.

DC: And then, or late 70's anyway, about 1980'ish time, you know, and so we, we, we opened the garden to the public. And it was very successful really because we had a lot of visitors and we did teas and we had stalls and it really was quite a good bit of fun and it actually wasn't a bad thing and it actually made you make that extra effort to try to keep it right - make it right, you know, and you could see were, were things could be improved.

MCG: It was great.

MCG: Yeah and expand cos you've always expanded on the garden as well.

DC: Ah-ha. So that was that.

MCG: Taking into that was that during that time that you really started to learn all the Latin names and really, you know, seemed genuinely looking through your gardening books.

DC: Well, I mean it was all, a lot of the things were new to me so I had to learn all the, the botanical names for the plants and most of the botanical names are, have a Latin derivation and it, it's, it's quite interesting you can actually tell a lot from a plant, of a plant from its name and.

MCG: Yeah. Yeah.

MCG: It was during, during all of that time that I seem to remember that you, you won an award for conservation so when, that was sort of something after the garden scheme that was about planting further trees on the farm.

DC: Well one of the first thing we did when we came to the farm was, my father, who was keen on trees, it wa, we then, being market gardeners we need shelter and it was important to try to, and the previous farmer hadn't really been very interested in planting trees more interested in wide open fields and keeping cows and things and that was his idea. But for market gardening

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and farming in general you need to have shelter and that's why all the woods that were planted over the whole of Lochhill were planted north to south because of the westerly winds the prevailing winds from the west or even the east in the winter time and it gives, it gives shelter not only for people working in the fields, but it also give an environmental shelter for other, it would, it gave wildlife passages throughout the farm for creatures to exist you know.

MCG: Which is an important part, because something that I hugely admire you is for knowing about all the, the importance of the plants for the animals and wildlife and when you go up into the new orchard up the back you, you talk about what plants are doing, where did you learn all of that sort of information?

DC: Well I think it really, much of that stems from when I was brought up at Dalkeith on Buccleuch estates at Dalkeith. And I took a lot of interest in the forestry work I went over on a Saturday when I was back from school and I'd go across the sawmill, I'd go with the, down to the, where the foresters were working in the nurseries and planting trees, young trees and sowing trees and I just enjoyed doing that and I, and I, and in fact I started a little garden of my own when I was at school. I started a garden in and I built in the orchard and I had to dig all the weeds out. And I got all the spars of the crates and made a fence and I, I just enjoyed my own little garden, laid it all out. And that's I think partly it's, it's partly what you were brought up to be.

MCG: No but it's about knowing what each, you know, the, the butterflies and what, what bugs the butterfly, you know, each different.

DC: Well of course we spent so much of our time as laddies running about in the forest and the woods down at, at Buccleuch estates that you got to know the birds and, and, and it, and we had orchards as well so we had all the butterflies and you knew were the butterflies pupated in different plants whether it was nettles for the Red Admirals or whatever it happened to be and we, and that's why to this day I still keep batches of nettles up the back of a wood to encourage the pupation of the butterflies.

MCG: Yeah I love that. I think those that need to know more about those sorts of things. You mentioned Peter Wing there Dad now Peter Wing came over a couple of years ago which is, is incredible from Australia now, but going back all those years it always reminds me of a specific time it was the cabbage case, can you tell us a little bit about the background of that?

DC: Well we had, we got all our vegetable seed from the one firm down south and the rep was Peter Wing who was not only a, the rep, but a very good family friend. In fact we used to go, we went on holiday to visit them down in York and when Peter was up travelling in Scotland he always stayed with my parents at Goshen and, in fact, he was a keen fisherman and he used to come with us up to Shetland. When we went fishing in the spring or autumn we went to Shetland fishing for sea trout and that's, Peter awe joined us quite a number of occasions up in Shetland. And got, we got to know quite a lot of people up there we had friends up in Scalloway and Lerwick that we could go and stay with. But it was the cabbage case, one of the crops we grew probably the biggest crop we a... single variety of vegetables we grew was Dutch White Cabbage and it was important aspect for us because in this area which is next to the Firth of Forth we are lucky to be relatively free from ... hard winter frosts and that was the whole secret to growing the Dutch White Cabbage. In Holland the Dutch White Cabbage are stored indoors and that's why they're white because they go white during the winter. But

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we were able to leave them in the fields all winter and cut them throughout the winter months. And because we were able to do that we then built up a huge trade of selling cabbage down to Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and we sent thousands of tons of cabbage down to these places because they just couldn't grow them. They could store them but couldn't grow them. And we had several hundred acres of these cabbage each year. And it was at that point one year, can't remem, 1980's in the 1980's when our neighbour at the farm next door, Mitchell's, we were concerned, just about come up harvest time, that the cabbage looked a bit different from the norm. They were much bigger much coarser and didn't look the same as the normal Dutch White Cabbage that we had. So

what we had to, we then waited and we called on the seed firm and they came up and had a look at them. And it was after the autumn.

MCG: Did Peter Wing not go up, was he not, did he not go up north as well or up to Shetland and he saw?

DC: Well no well that, at that time when they were talking about the possibility of a mistake having been made in the variety of cabbage that we'd been supplied. Peter Wing, who was going up to Shetland to go fishing, Mr Mitchell asked him to call by and have a look at the cabbages. And he came in and he could see there was a problem and he phoned back to headquarters to his firm and told them there's a problem with this cabbage it's something wrong with it, it's not the right cabbage. So that rather spoiled his holiday to some degree because he, he went up that evening, he went up and went to Shetland. And when, when he went to Shetland with his friend, another friend from York, they went up to Sandvoe up in the north of Shetland which was owned by Jimmy Johnstone and his wife and every year we had sent up cabbage plants and sprout plants for him to grow up in Shetland to feed to the sheep. And of course the cabbage, because they were the wrong variety nonetheless they were wrong in as much that they were a cow feeding cabbage and they were, grew, grew absolutely enormous which was exactly what Jimmy Johnstone wanted because he wanted great big cabbages. But they weren't much good for us and of course when Peter Wing called in to see Jimmy Johnstone at Sandvoe he said 'Come and have a look at my cabbages Peter, the, the best I've ever had' and of course he looked at them and he said 'But where did you get the plants?' 'Oh' he said 'I got them up from Willy Chalmers at Goshen' and that's when he realised that we had the same cabbage as Mitchell. And he went back to Lerwick and phoned headquarters and said to tell them that you've got the same problem with us. And they, they then said 'But we know they've already told us down here that we've got this problem'. And so in the usual manner of when things get in to the hands of lawyers they come along with this legal term we offer such and such but without prejudice, which is a legal term of course. And, and hoping that we would, well at that time they offered us £75 an acre without prejudice. Well considering we had a couple o' hundred acres that was, that was peanuts, I mean virtually what they were offering us was really just the price of the plants, the seed. They, that wasn't the, the rental, the fertiliser, the planting, the cultivation all the work that had gone into growing the crop which was worked out as several hundred pounds per acre plus we had no profit. We, we were, not only had we spent all that money, but we had no profit either so we had no work for the men. And we, we were, we said at the time through our le, lawyer that we'd be prepared, ok a mistake has been made, and we were prepared what we were really interested in was recouping what we'd spent in putting the crop there not necessarily the fact that we'd lost any profit at all we were wanting back not £75 an acre

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but they wouldn't budge and we kept getting this, these legal letters £75 an acre. And so we had no.

MCG: Oh no. Right! So the whole thing went to court.

MCG: How were, sorry this is a silly question, but how were the bags, the seed bags labelled? You know would've these bags come up in, in like were the seed bags, did they not have a label of the type of cabbage on them?

DC: Yes but that, that's the whole problem that was where the problem started because in the warehouse, in the warehouse where they, in the warehouse where the seed is stored the seed comes in big hundred, hundredweight and a half bags great big huge like bags like grain great big bags and there're all triple wrapped and sealed with a seal on them. And I could see what had happened quite frankly it was quite plain what had happened was that someone, when they'd taken the label, they put the label, they'd be filling up making an order up taking stuff out and the label's probably dropped on the ground and they picked the label up and put it in the bag, but they maybe picked up the label that was in the bag next to that which was the bag of cattle cabbage and they put that in there and the next guy come along to fill up make up the order has then filled it from that bag which's got the wrong label in it. And that's, it was their mistake but they wouldn't admit it but.

MCG: Ok yeah. Right. Right. Yes.

MCG: So did you have the bags or the labels said it was the right type but it was just the wrong type from.

DC: No well we bought, we bought it in, we were only buying in sort of cart, paper heavy paper, heavy brown paper bags, usual seed bags. That's what they came in, you know, just bags like that size and so.

MCG: So what was the cull, it ended up that you had to go, you know, it what was it taken to the court here or did it ended up.

DC: Well they tried, they tried to work it out through the lawyers, but what the seed firm had based their whole argument on if that's the case was that at the back of the catalogue, and you get that on the back of so many catalogues and that, and the small writing like if you bought a ticket for something and something happened it had written we take no liability for something wrongful [unclear] of the seed, wrongful if, if it didn't do as it was meant to do. But that wasn't the case what they had, they, I mean one cabbage seed looks much like another and that that the implications of having a cattle feeding cabbage and a Dutch White Cabbage were immense, one was just cattle, feeding cattle which was, you know, nothing. So what the firm did then was they sent us letters saying do what you can, try to sell them, try to eat them off with cattle, try to make something, you know, they were wanting us to go ahead and run cab, run cattle over the field or sheep over the field or something of the kind to eat them off. And we had to make an effort to try, we had to make an effort to try to sell the cabbages. Well I mean we were getting a net a cabbage, well the cabbages were about that size and you had kinda to just about stand on them to, to get them into the bag, you get about three cabbages in a, well what housewife is gonny come in and want a cabbage that size you know? And eventually we, we did that we went through all the motions of that. Nobody wanted them. So we were left with this, the only option we had was to try and run sheep, but we couldn't get

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enough people just run sheep over them or anything, I mean there was that many of them! And eventually they didn't, they didn't keep they deteriorated very quickly in winter so that was them they were useless. And so the whole thing went on like this and it, the legal case went on for years. And what we couldn't get was no one, no one had challenged, no one had challenged this before, this is a new thing that nobody had ever done before because if you had maybe wanted to have barley for malting and they gave you a, a feeding barley then the difference would, you would've got would've been the difference between the feeding price

and the malting price. But in this case it was so huge between cattle feeding cabbage and, I mean you're talking thousands of pounds an acre and they wouldn't budge. And they still kept with this without prejudice thing.

MCG: No.

MCG: Do you think they were thinking that you were in, compared to them, a small business and that you would eventually just cave in and let it all go by is that what?

DC: Well we tried to, there were two or three small growers further down the coast had received the same seed, but some of them only grew a small acreage and they, they didn't, it didn't bother them too much one way or another because probably they kept sheep and just ran the sheep over them and said 'Och cut their losses' and that's it. But that wasn't the point we wanted, we wanted compensation to offset our, our, our loss and they wouldn't budge. And no one had actually ever, there was no precedent to go on and no one had actually challenged this ever before. But we were, we dug our heels in by that time and we couldn't see where it was fair that anyone could get away, I mean it's like you for instance going to a cinema and a bit o', a bit falls off ceiling and hits you on the head and you get taken to hospital and you's try to claim damages from the theatre, but they've got on the bottom o' the ticket 'We take no responsibility if you get hurt'. You know, if the ceiling falls on your head, too bad, you know, tough you know. You, you should've had insurance.

MCG: Yes of course. Yeah, exactly.

MCG: You should've a hard hat on.

DC: Ah well something like that anyway it, it no one actually chall, challenged this whole thing and we went at that time to the National Farmers' Union and explained to them that we were having to fight on the, for this principle on behalf of growers would they, where they prepared to give any assistance? And I still remember yet the National Farmers' Union came back and offered us £250. Well when you've got legal fees how far does £250 go? But anyway be that as it may what we did was we kept fighting and we wouldn't settle for anything short of what we wanted and wouldn't accept anything that they offered us. All we wanted was compensation for what we'd lost. And as I said mistakes can be made and we were quite prepared to accept a mistake had been made if they were as well.

MCG: Tell us about what it was like when it the, the, the bit in court cos that's it's quite a.

DC: Well after, after having fought for, we kept this legal thing going on for about ten years and eventually the case went to the Court of Assizes in London and the judge at the court was Judge Parker and it was, we went, all went down with our lawyer to this case and I can still remember sitting there and I felt almost quite sorry, in fact Peter Wing was on our side cos he could, he could see fine that it was them had made the mistake, they'd made the mistake. And

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but I felt quite sorry for some o' the other people we knew who were with Finnies at the time, Mr Bevin particularly, who was called up as a witness in, in the witness box. And it, I found the whole case really quite amusing, I found the whole case quite, really quite amusing. Isn't it nice?

MCG: Oh my goodness!

MCG: We're looking at a, a woodpecker outside the window that's why we're distracted from the, the deal right this second.

DC: But the, the thing that amused me most of all was Judge Parker who wasn't a very big man and he had a wig that was, I think possibly had been made for someone slightly larger and he, he kept leaning to the side and slowly slipping across the bench which was too big for him anyway and his wig kept moving over to the side of his head until and then he would suddenly sit up and his wig's just about fell off he had to keep pulling his wig back on to top of his head again. And we found this quite amusing, but I thought, but at the same time I could see amongst the humour what a clever man this was he was listening to every last thing that was being said very carefully. And I can still remember the one occasion when Mr Bevin who's acting, was in the giving evidence on behalf of the seed firm and he was trying to explain to the Judge Parker that the, about the seed. Because the, the judge kept asking him where was the seed kept and he said 'Well it was in a, in a, down at our headquarters in Essex in a large tome' 'And where are records of the seeds held' 'Oh it's in, down in our Essex office' and this 'How could the, the seed be mixed up?' And he couldn't really give an explanation for that but it was quite obvious that, that someone had obviously put the wrong label back in the bag of seed. And that we'd been given the wrong thing. And then the judge slowly lifted his head up off the bench and looked at Mr Bevin and said 'And tell me Mr Bevin when you discovered that this mistake had been made what happened to the rest of the seed? Where's the rest of this bag of seed?' 'Well me lud' he said 'When we discovered this problem the seed was then sent away as it always is at the end of a season or any problem like this and it's sent away and it's sold on as' and said 'Where's it go?' he said 'It's sold on as bird, put all in one big batch and sold as bird seed'. And it was then that Judge Parker slowly sort of rose up again said 'So what you're trying to tell me Mr Bevin is that what you sold our, these growers, was bird seed'. And Mr Bevin sat, was sit, standing there and saying 'Well no, no my lud no, no my, I I think I'm I'm ah' and he sort of stuttered along and he said 'I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel like I'm swimming against the tide I'm not putting it over properly, I feel I'm swimming against the tide and I'm getting nowhere'. And I can still remember this wee judge he was over like that and suddenly he said 'Keep swimming'. I thought it was really quite good but I thought he had him completely tied in knots he'd, he'd, he'd, he'd, he'd actually he'd done, he'd done himself in you know he'd he, he hadn't he'd he couldn't, he couldn't give an answer. There was no. [Unclear]

MCG: (She laughs). Yeah.

MCG: And that was his last, his last ever case this judge?

DC: No. Well that, that case ruled, ruled in our favour in some degree, but the firm then threw their last role o' the dice and took the whole thing to the House o' Lords and the head, the head judge in Britain was Lord Denning and Lord Denning was Master of the Rolls and he was the one who at the end of the day you can go no further than he and Lord Denning had to rule

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on this case for the cabbages. And I can still remember coming in that evening and that was Lord Denning's last case as head of Master of Rolls. And I can still remember I came in at, at tea-time and there on the television news was Lord Denning being interviewed coming out of his last case and it. He, he was a dignified gentleman he had a bowler hat and he came out and he, he was talking about this his last case. He said 'It, it rather reminds me of Alice in

Wonderland, of Cabbages and Kings'. He said 'And I've always stood up for the smaller man in, in, in this case I've ruled in his favour'.

MCG: No. Ah that's right.

MCG: That is amazing.

DC: It was, it was quite something it was.

MCG: That's brilliant and it was on the news at the end.

DC: Aye it was the six o' clock news when we came in there's Lord Denning walking out getting interviewed and, and it was our cabbage case.

MCG: All from that first spotting of the.

DC: And of course once he'd made the decision in our favour we got the full compensation that we had claimed, that we were entitled that, that we, we by that time they had ruled us enough that we wanted a full compensation not just to settle up with what we'd lost, we wanted the full compensation. And bearing in mind that the case had rattled on for about 11 years and the interest, interest rate, court interest was 11% it had mounted up and the firm went out of business. The seed firm went out of business. It was the last thing that they needed, it didn't have to happen it they'd just come along in the first place and sat down and negotiated we'd settled up.

MCG: Yeah. Wow.

MCG: That's right, yes. And they just wouldn't have expected that all at all. Talking about all of that that's a really an incredible story but at that are we're just going to finish up here with a little bit about you mentioned the last time about Lord Wymess and just, and, and the painting story and I just like it so I know it's a little snippet of a story, but Lord Wymess who you got to know from literally just local church and.

DC: Well Lord Wymess was a fellow elder at the church and he had been asked to come along to give a talk to the Gullane Men's Club about the art of Gosford. And the minister at the time was Norman Faulds and he had arranged to go along and pick up Lord Wymess at Gosford House and take him down to the Gullane Men's Club. And of course when he arrived to pick up Lord Wymess, Lord Wymess came walking out to the car and said 'I'll tell you what Norman why don't we just take the old painting throw it in the back o' the car we could take it down let them have a look at it'. And that was the Botticelli the only, the only Botticelli in private hands in Britain of the Madonna and Child and, and of course Lady Wymess fortunately she was still there persuaded him that this perhaps not the best idea to throw this picture in the back of the car and take it down to the Gullane Men's Club. And, and he, he then acceded to that so they didn't take it, but Norman Faulds, Norman Faulds said 'Thank goodness for that see that I'd be driving down with this', and eventually they sold it to the National Gallery for £20 million.

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MCG: They didn't take it.

MCG: (She laughs) It's just, I think that's just, it sums up the.

DC: Norman said 'Hew thank goodness they didn't, thank goodness they didn't put it in the back of the car'. He had a little Ford Escort or something, £20 million pound Botticelli.

MCG: £20 million painting, pound painting. That's brilliant. Oh Dad thank you so, so much I think there's so many more things that we could, we could talk about over the years. You'll come back.

DC: Quite. I'll, I'll come back, just hang on a minute.

MCG: Before we finish up here Dad has just disappeared off cos he's still got the paper cutting from, from, well he's got many papers from all of these stories and all of these moments. But before we finish up Dad I love hearing your stories about going down to London to visit your Mother's my gran, nannies family in London. Can you remember, you know, that sort of round about the war time because, and just give us a little bit about where, where they lived and what you saw and your experience of going down on the train from Scotland at that time just, I love hearing about that.

DC: Well in nine, after the war we couldn't visit London during the war and we went down in 1946 on the Flying Scotsman for the first year and it was when I got to London and I only had my sister, the oldest of my sisters, and my two younger brothers and I was put in charge of them and we went off in the train to London and it was the Flying Scotsman each year we went down to London on. And we were met in Kings Cross by my uncle who had been in the navy during the war and they took us back to Lambeth. And that's when, the first time I ever met my grandparents in London. My grandfather was the caretaker for the church and the school at Archbishop's school and Archbishop's church at the park in London at Lambeth. And he was a keen gardener and it, it was it I can still remember it as vivid as if it were yesterday when I arrived there the whole thing was a bit of a cultural shock in some ways, but when I got there, there was a little cottage on the corner just beside the gate going into Archbishop's Park which you could walk through and at the far end you walked down the banks of the Thames and you came to the Houses of Parliament. And when I got there on the other side of the road from this cottage and the park you cross the road and when you looked across the road you could see nothing, not a thing. It was only when you crossed the road and looked over the edge of the pavement that there was nothing but a huge hole left for hundreds of yards right along there which had all been bombed flat. And all that was left was a lot of rubble and ruins and holes and the holes where all full of water and it intrigued us as, as youngsters they were all full of gold fish as well. And but it did make me realise what, what a devastating thing the whole thing must've been where they lived and I admired the kinda stoical way they had accepted and put up with it, because I can remember saying to my grandmother 'You're lucky you didn't get bombed'. And she just sort of turned and said (in an east end accent) 'Ha we only got our windows blown in by a doodlebug so we wis lucky'. And I just, I thought that was the kinda attitude they had they were just lucky and I can still remember walking into the living room and my grandfather, who'd been gassed in the trenches in the First World War, was sitting there he was very thin, drawn looking little man and he was such a nice quite just nice man to speak to. And it was, there was something about the whole thing that you could realise, made you realise what they'd put up with during the war. And in the room as you

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walked in there was three pianos one on the other side of the wall and they must've had sing-songs during the war when things where, you know, shut down before they had to go into the

shelters. And I just looked at the whole thing and I just thought what a different world it is when you could walk into the church and it wasn't closed. You could walk into school and nobody touch anything, nobody, nobody, there didn't seem to kinda be mindless violence or, or nothing people never harmed anything they just left things alone because it, there was a spirit about them. There was a Cockney spirit it, it was a Cockney spirit and I still remember it really well and the sad thing I find at the end of it all is that my younger brothers and sisters never met their grandparents, because my grandfather had died before they ever were old enough to go and visit him and that's that.

MCG: Yes.

MCG: Really that's really so that's an amazing, amazing memory and I love hearing about that and we must go down and visit again actually do some art museums and things.

DC: Well it's, it was, it was quite something that my two young, younger brothers there went to stay with my Uncle Fred and Aunt Nell and my Uncle Fred was head gardener to Lord Sopwith. And we went down to visit them and I can still remember he took me to Wisley Gardens and we walked round and he pointed out all the different plants and such like. But he was head gardener at that big estate with 16 gardeners and I've never seen a place like it for sheer scale of glasshouses and walls with fruit trees and everything along it. And Lord Sopwith, of course, was the head, was the aircraft man. He was the one who started, who build the aircraft in the First World War the Sopwith Pup the Sopwith Camel.

MCG: Ah right. Right.

MCG: It's amazing how you can link the whole, all of these things right back round and then back to gardening and growing and the whole, that whole.

DC: And I always admire, I always admired my grandfather in London who won best garden in Lambeth.

MCG: Really? So he.

DC: And when it was appeared in the paper my fah, my grandfather was called Charles Henry Middleton and there was a, a big gardening book out at the time by a gardener called Charles Henry Middleton and it had in the paper, I remember Mum saying to me, that they had the other Charles Henry Middleton.

MCG: Aw that's incredible.

DC: And I mean the garden was just magic it really, if you came out the back, out the back of the house, this little cottage there was a, a beautiful old fashioned gold, goldfish pond and then the, the road, the path went off there and down both sides with the boxwood edging on either side the path and halfway down on the right hand side you went through the gate, a little gateway and into the church. And, and the church was just at the other side of the gate and you went in there. And at the bottom was all fruit trees on the wall and hollyhocks and aw it was just magic it was really nice.

00.52.19

MCG: Just beautiful, yeah. Well thank you so much for the whole interview. I think we might have to come back and revisit and, and do some other parts because I love your stories. And thank so, so much Dad.

DC: Well I mean it's, it doesn't seem anything extraordinary to me but it, it's, it's, it's been interesting and it, it's, it's surprising how much the people that you've known as a child and the interest that can be sparked into you as a child it always stays with you.

MCG: Ah but it is.

MCG: That's amazing I agree completely thank you so much, thanks Dad.

DC: It just, just I was interested in gardening so was and, and, and it just was natural just never thought anything else

MCG: Yeah, yeah.

MCG: You can tell, and that's, and, and, yeah, thank you, thanks so much.

[00.53.27]