

Interviewee(s): Betty Watson (BW); Susanne Watson (SW)	Interviewer(s): Alice Haywood (AH)
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REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Musselburgh

Running time: 00.00

AH: OK, so, I'm Alice Haywood, I'm a fieldworker on this project and I'm in Musselburgh with Betty and Susanne, both sisters who grew up in Musselburgh. If I could just ask you to introduce yourselves?

SW: Hi, my name is Susanne and my full name, the name I was born with was Susanne Ferrells Watson.

BW: Hi, my name is Betty and the name I was born with was Betty Millar Watson.

AH: And can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up?

BW: We grew up in Bush Street – well, Ah grew up in Bush Street. You were Caird Row, Bush Street?

SW: Yes.

BW: I, well they were fishermen's houses, our Dad was a fisherman, on the Aquatus, LH232. [quiet laughter]

AH: Love- so you've got positive memories of your lifetime there?

BW: Yeah.

AH: Growing up there.

BW: There lived – our auntie lived next door and our cousins, and on the other side it was half-cousins, it was a community, it was all cousins, everybody was cousins or aunties or...

AH: And ye were going in and out of each other's houses –

BW: Yes. Stealin biscuits and...

AH: Yeah.

BW: Our grandparents lived underneath, not while I was... Our grandmother died before I was born but my grandfather was still alive.

AH: So all just really close-knit in that area?

SW: Yeh.

BW: Yeh.

SW: Seemingly the houses, the houses were built with – by a relation of ours, an ancestor, and it depends who you speak to, em, it's something like a great grandfather, and he –

BW: Our grandfather. Cos they were born in 1901. Everybody bought – ah, well 1903 was our grandfather.

SW: No.

BW: Dad was born in 1916.

SW: Yeh, so ma Dad, ma Granda Watson wouldn't ha bought something thirty –

BW: Great grandfather, great grandfather.

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SW: Yeh, sorry, one of our – our great grandfather had so many houses built for his [coughs] for his children and, em, they sort of came down, so that's why we had everybody sort of round about us. In those days in Fisherrow you wanted next to your family, right? You were happier if you were staying next tae your sister, your grannie, your uncle or... em, you know, a relation.

AH: Yeah.

SW: So we all grew up like that. And we loved it. They were nice houses. Em, I've just been speaking lately to somebody about houses and I think that your house is the house you were born in an brought up in – but that only works if you had a good childhood, if you had a horrible childhood it doesn't work. Because we always speak about the house we were brought up in –

BW: Uh-huh.

SW: - rather than the house we stay in or houses we huv stayed in before. Em, am, my next door neighbour had to sell her house and her daughter who was brought up in that house was telling people that came round to see the house all the things she remembered about it. So we hud a good childhood without realising we hud a good childhood, em, we didn't know that you could get any other childhood. I'm not sayin it was, we were spoilt or anything like that –

BW: Our playground was the beach. And we used to play in the sewerage pipe [background amused gasp] but we didn't know it was a sewerage pipe, tae us it was just a pipe full of barnacles. [background splutter] We actually used to look in the end and poke about [laughs] –

SW: Yeah, we used to pick the crabs out o the water at the bottom o it, and we used to walk along it, in our gym shoes –

BW: An fall an get all –

SW: - winded –

BW: - an a lot o the time we were in our bare feet playin on the mussels, the mussel beds.

AH: An you just left to kind of, to go out to play?

Both: Yeh.

BW: We made belts, we made shops out o the – we built shops in the sand, we built chappie, smashin up the stones, the porous stones –

SW: What we could do is -

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BW: - built houses –

SW: We'd get the shovel from yer Mum, and ye'd go down the beach. You would dig it all out, and then you would make a seat at the bottom, make a seat, and you would pat it round about, and then you would go and get whichever obnoxious thing you managed to pick up off the beach cos you were only a child, and you used to decorate your seat, an every – and we all had our seats in this house, em...

BW: We had a sink, an we had – you just made things out o sand.

SW: Yeah – you just built -

AH: Just use your imagination?

BW: Yeh.

SW: Yeah.

BW: And then we used to – there was a swing park as well that was near and we used to play on top o the – we called in the Callan House roof [amused] – what was it, it was – the Council stored old, dy'mind, newspapers –

SW: In those, in those days –

BW: - that had been used an we used to climb up an it must've been riddled wi rats an everything but.

AH: Oh my goodness.

BW: We used to sit on the roof an then jump into aa these news – Ah would've been what? Five or six? [laughs]

AH: Oh!

SW: Seemingly what happened in those days was the Council actually recycled paper, an they had a paper collection, an the housewife would put string round about it an sort o make it into a parcel an it would go outside and the refuse men or bucket men or whatever it was would come round and pick this up so there was a kind of collection solely to pick up this, and that's where it was stored. And we used to climb up – it was like an old dry stone wall, we used to climb up and I'd haul Betty up cos she didn't have as long legs as me –

BW: [unclear] and cousins

SW: - an we used to sit on the wall an the men would say "d'you want to come in and have a look?" And we would go over, all huge big piles –

BW: [unclear]

SW: - o wrapped up paper. Em. It was a – health and safety, it were nothing. An they – the men said "d'you want to use it?" and it was a [makes rapid chopping sound] like this, it was shakin, it had a conveyer belt we would've been dead if we were in it but we got to press the buttons and everything and uh, yeh!

AH: So many things that you – that just would not happen now, would it? I mean, you were

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just left – and just considering these men, you know, you didn't know who these men were.

SW: I know.

AH: And just, you were just – innocent, wasn't it?

SW: Yeh.

BW: It was. But we used to play at the swing park because our Mum used to bowl at the bowling green so we used to be at the swing park and we used to get money for chips.

SW: We used to try.

BW: Because there was a – yeah, we tried.

SW: We tried every night.

BW: Sometimes we were lucky. Sometimes we were lucky.

SW: Yeh. Sometimes we got wir ice cream on a Saturday.

BW: But Dad was never there during the week. It was just our Mum.

SW: Yeh. Yeh.

BW: He only came home at weekends. But it used to be “wait til yer Dad comes home”. But he done nothin – he didnae care. [laughter]

SW: That's what the – that's what every child had where we were, their Dad wasn't there.

BW: So we didnae know any different.

AH: O course. O course.

BW: Y'know. It wasn't... and we went, we both went tae Campie School.

SW: Mm.

AH: Ah, I was going to ask you about school, what was that like?

[coughing]

BW: Ah can't really... it was school. [background coughing] You know, it was just school and, I remember –

AH: Did you walk?

BW: Yes we walked, yeah. Ourselves. Well – Susanne took me.

AH: OK.

BW: Because she was still there.

AH: Ah hah, so you both went together.

SW: Aye.

BW: An she used to come in, me Ma, wi what we called our Leith piece, which was just a packet o crisps for break.

SW: Or an apple.

BW: Somethin like that. An sh'used to, it always used to fall behind the radiator an Ah never goh it. [laughs]

SW: Mum, Mum took me I think at the very beginning, an I refused seemingly tae walk down the road wi her so I – I think I was allowed to walk back from school when Ah was five.

AH: Goodness.

SW: But there was lollypop men any place I was crossing the road.

BW: Yeah. An then I remember I was ill, I had scarlet fever, and... when I was five, and they let me present the bouquet tae the Honest Lad an Lass, with William Covan was his name, the two of us. I was terrified he'd see ma pants an vest when I was gettin changed and I was only five. [chuckles]

AH: Just super aware – and so and

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that was another nice memory for you, your schooldays.

SW: Oh yes.

BW: Yeh.

SW: Campie was a go– I loved Campie.

BW: Campie was a good school. A good school.

SW: Campie was a good school.

BW: It was a good school.

SW: I used to – when I got my bike, when I was a bit older and I got my bike, and I must've been playing eh so much with my friends that I got home and went [gasp] "Ah've left ma bike!" So I ran back up to school and – in those days the school gates weren't locked and we used to put our bikes just against the wall. And my bike was still standin there.

AH: Yeah.

SW: There it was, you know.

BW: I didn't bike because she fell off it.

AH: Oooh.

BW: And hurt herself so I wasn't allowed [laughs]

AH: Oh so weren't allowed to, to bike after that. And what was it – so it sounds like a safe environment all around.

BW: It was very safe. It was very, very safe.

AH: Very healthy. The community looked after you as well.

SW: Yeah. She got lost one night and everybody was out and it was in the winter and you know it was just like –

BW: Is that when I run away to join the circus?

SW: Oh no no no. Em, she was just, she was actually in a friend's house. And we were out – oh, it was great fun! You know, we were searchin every place, an she just went up to this wee pal's n eventually – an o course not everybody had phones, so she – that Mum eventually must've said something, "Come on, I'll take you home now."

AH: Yeah.

SW: You know. And there she – that's where she was found.

AH: And you, you didn't realise that anything was going on, that – what was the big fuss about?

BW: An I remember another thing, time, that I got into trouble was wi the rag an bone man.

SW: Oh. Yeah.

BW: Ma Mum had a apron that had came, it was – was it Aunt Jean had sent it from Hong Kong or something – it was a big fancy, really fancy – so I just grabbed the first thing Ah saw to get a balloon, which was the apron. And youse –

AH: And what happened?

BW: Ma Mum an Susanne came running after me but I was [laughter]

SW: Ah bet you must – Ah bet you must've been something like three or four. And eh, I was coming in from school for lunch. And ma Mum – and I only had an hour and I had to walk

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stroke run down the road, have lunch, then walk stoke run back up. So Ah'd just got in and just at that, she heard him and it used to hang on the back o a door, and she sort of lifted her hand, she managed to unhook it off the hook, and straight out the glass door, down the stairs [coughs], down the stairs, and offski. Um, and Mum said "You'll huv to get it back!" So I was almost at the swings and she'd sold it by this time, she had the balloon in her hand –

AH: And she was happy.

SW: She was happy. And I said "My Mum says she's not to sell it and I'm to get it back!" So he gave me it back, you know, I think it happened loads o times, you know.

AH: Yeah.

SW: And I dragged – she wasn't happy and I dragged her back up the strait and home so I could have my lunch. [background chuckling]

AH: So did you do a lot of looking after Betty then?

SW: Mm, yeah. I could quite easily fall over a banana skin in the hall for forty minutes, erm.

BW: To amuse me.

SW: To amuse her, while my Mum went on – I was just a child so it was, you know, I wasn't an adult saying you know "come on, I've done this long enough!" I just kept doin it. Again. Again.

BW: And then, my cousin used to stay next door. Nancy. An she was ten years older than me. And every Saturday when she was going out, I used to go in, "Do ma makeup, do ma makeup." So she used to had to do my makeup before she went out every Saturday [laughing].

AH: You became the expert kind of makeup artist in the house.

SW: No it was Betty, that wasn't me.

BW: But I was the youngest round about at the time, so it was good. And Susanne's friends used to buy me sweets. I used ta – I played on it, of course I did! [laughs]

AH: Being the youngest, yeah!

BW: I did.

AH: So you just had this really lovely network of family and adults –

BW: Everybody knew everybody.

AH: Uh huh. Uh huh. And what were your Christmasses like?

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Can you remember anything in particular-?

BW: I remember we used ta – I remember one year, when I got my dolls pram, loading all my Christmas presents into the dolls pram and going over to Auntie Phamie's who stayed, like, further along the road, to show her all my presents, ta'en them round the aunties to show. But it was a –

SW: Mum and Dad –

BW: - but we'd always have Christmas at home with Mum and Dad.

SW: Dad had a – Dad – here, this is a good one, em, Dad – did Dad save up his cigarette coupons for that cine camera?

BW: We've actually got it on camera, on tape. [chuckles]

SW: We've got this, an my Dad had a cine camera and, eh, it was –

BW: It was cigarette coupons.

SW: - I think it was, you used to get these –

BW: Yeh. Embassy coupons.

SW: - Embassy, and it was a wee ticket thing. And, em, you just saved them up and –

BW: And you could buy them, people sold them -

SW: - it there was so many – there were shops down in Leith –

BW: - so you could go about buy a – to get something. Yeah.

SW: You'd go and ask for a thousand whatever it was because it was cheaper to do that an buy whatever it was than to physically go into a shop. So we think it – we think he actually, em –

BW: Bought the cine camera.

SW: Bought the cine camera with these coupons but Ah the other bits he did but, he bought hisself, but Ah can remember being told “hold on now, wait! Can’t come in the living room yet!” [chuckling] He was gettin his cine camera ready. And it would, it would pan round the curtains and she had these Chinese lanterns –

BW: That she brought back from Hong Kong, yeah.

SW: That she brought back from Hong Kong. And it would pan over all the presents that were sitting waiting for us and then we were allowed to come in and he used to watch us and we’d go [gasps] –

BW: And then our gran used to stay with us as well. My Mum’s Mum. She used to stay with us. And then, so she was there until our cousins came back from Hong Kong and then it was, she’s spent so long with us and so long wi them. They stayed in Portobello. And, eh, so’s

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it was split between the two families.

SW: But the Fisher family as a family celebrated New Year more, because I can’t remember my Dad not being there at Christmas but Ah think, Ah think there was a time when they actually fished on Christmas Day.

AH: Right.

SW: And it was always Hogmanay and New Year.

AH: Hogmanay was bigger.

SW: And you went to all your family, you went round. And eh, all the women made raspberry –

BW: Cordal.

SW: - Cordial, right. It was a bottle, and you filled it up wi this and then you put it in the juice bottles and that was what the children had.

BW: Filled up with water or something.

SW: And it was a wee drop like elderflower, now, and filled up with, with... and that’s what the kids got. No ice. Just a glass o that.

AH: Yes.

BW: Djyou remember when Uncle Mike, that was our uncle that stayed next door, and he was president, eh -

SW: Of the Fishin Association.

BW: Fishin, Fishin Association. And it was the Fishermen’s Walk. So the band – I wis about nine or ten then. And the bands and everythin were all round here, he gave them all a drink so they were all round the close and everybody was there and it was... You know the Fishermen’s Walk used to be somethin else. [clears through]

AH: And where was that?

SW: It was at Lorretto.

AH: Oh!

BW: They start was at what used to be the Seaman's Mission –

SW: Church. It was a church.

BW: In... New Street. I think it's near the Baptist church? Then it would walk right along past the harbour, along the Main Street to Lorretto. And we would have like a –

SW: Fishwife's clothes on.

AH: Oh right....

BW: Yeh. Fishwife's clothes on, and there would be races an there would be dancin an there was a beer tent an you got –

SW: An you got yeer pie!

BW: - Sometimes ye got your pie and cake, you know you got something to eat.

SW: Your bag o cake. Whatever it was.

BW: Tug o war and aa that type o things.

AH: Oh right, so it was a real big occasion.

BW: An then at night there would be a dance.

AH: Ooh.

BW: But we never got – we were too young. [laughs] Then!

AH: Too young. And were you, were you allowed to stay up for Hogmanay

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then? For seein the bells?

SW: You could – if you could –

BW: - If you could!

SW: If you could. But more often than not we just -

BW: We didn't.

SW: - fell asleep.

AH: Yeah, you would would, ye were too young.

SW: Cos I remember, it was one year, and I was allowed to do it and she wasn't. [Laughter] So I was [laughing] – Mum said [whispers] 'Just go tae yer bed and we'll come an get yeh.' Ah said, 'OK'. And I think floppy ears was listening and she was – 'no no,' and I did, I went to my bed and I fell asleep and I woke up about two or three in the morning an I went [exhales], an I don't know if I had a watch or a clock and Ah went – [whispers] so angry! I went through and I woke them up, my Mum and Dad. [Background chuckling] I said, 'You were to get me up!' Everybody seeminly was up, they were sprinklin water in my face and everything to wake me up and [laughs]

AH: And just, you didn't wake.

SW: I just wouldn't get awakem I just couldn't do it. An they were saying 'Someone took her glass o water and was flickin it on ye!' But they were, they couldn't get me out o my bed, so.

BW: It was more New Year's Day with us –

SW: Yeah, yeh yeh.

BW: When we would go next door to Auntie Meg's and down tae auld Teenie's, n...

SW: An somebody would sing, n –

BW: Y'know, it'd be...

AH: And you've got vivid memories of that? Clearly, yeah. Uh huh.

SW: An then there was the firsh t footin, where you had to be tall, dark an handsome, an a bit o coal and, um, a bit, something – it was a bit black bun, wasn't it?

BW: Now it's sweets. We still do that at new year.

AH: Oh nice! Take sweets to – uh huh.

BW: Sweets.

AH: I guess it makes sense, you don't need a big, uh... And what about your – um – I was going to ask you, I can't remember what... Yeah, just growing up, you stayed in the same house?

Both: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

AH: Uh huh. And obviously you've seen quite a lot of changes, then?

BW: Yes a lot of changes on Fisherrow. I would love to move this house back to Fisherrow but to the Fisherrow I knew. Not Fisherrow now.

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Cos it's really...

SW: Like it was a – it was a community in there

BW: Not [unclear] You didn't need to come over, like, it was a – everything was there -

SW: No I never – yeah.

BW: Everything was there. Shops, bakers, shoe shops, clothes shops, everything was there.

SW: I never crossed the water til I went to High School.

BW: An Ah I was told it was ma own fault when Ah had problems wi this house when we first moved in, mega problems, that it was ma own fault for crossin the water. [Chuckling] [unclear]

SW: We had, we had everything in Fisherrow, you know.

BW: You didn't need to.

SW: There was so many bakers, so many butchers...

BW: The supermarkets. We had mini-markets.

SW: We had wee mini-markets. So many ice cream parlours. So many chip shops. Eh, plumbers, hair dressers...

BW: - Everything. Everything. Ye didn't – it was a – ye didn't –

SW: Dairies.

BW: You know it was – you didn't, there was no need to go to the other side.

SW: No. Or – or go into Edinburgh.

BW: The only time you would mebbe go to the other side would be maybe for furniture.

AH: Oh OK.

BW: To the mall furnishin.

AH: Where was that?

BW: That is now that charity type place, next to the Hollies.

AH: Oh that big, that big place?

BW: Yeh.

AH: Oh.

BW: That used to be a furniture place.

AH: Uh huh.

SW: A big furniture place.

BW: Yeah. An that would be the only thing you would –

AH: You would need to –

BW: Uh-huh.

SW: I can remember – now you'll not, um, d'you know where Stag's Pub is? The easiest way to say it. Yes. You know the car park there.

AH: Yes.

SW: Right. Now, it was about where the car park was, I'm not a hundred percent certain, but there was a market gardener's in there.

AH: Oh.

SW: And, em, I was allowed to go and pick the flowers. Em, and so my Mum would give me so much money and Ah would go into the market gardener's and they- the market gardeners would tell me how much each of the flowers was. And like, and I remember they had these beautiful dahlias? Dahlias are my favourite flower and I used to always to get the dahlias but I think they were quite expensive and so ma Mum didnae get very many flowers if it was [laughing] –

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if Ah was allowed tae pick them! Er, and there was a market gardeners there – there would've been other things that they grew, but Ah just remember the flowers

BW: But they had – down, carrying on down that street, you had the co-op and there was everythin there. There was the baby shop, the butcher’s, there was haberdashers, there was...

AH: Oh, the haberdashers.

BW: There was everythin you could ever – and it was old, I loved it because it was old-fashioned, really really old – but like Mr Selfridge on the TV?

AH: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

BW: [unclear]

SW: I think it was more like Are You Being Served. [laughter]

BW: Right, but it was the old-fashioned – we had to put the money in the eh –

SW: They went up the tube –

BW: - Like the tube and it [whoosh]

SW: - and the money went up the tube.

AH: Oh right yes!

SW: And the money came back down the tube.

BW: And yeh parcel was all tied up with string an all in brown paper.

AH: And were you ever allowed to go – well, or asked to go and do the bit shopping –

Both: Oh aye, yeh, yeh.

SW: I did it, yeh.

BW: We did. Yeh had yer jobs to do.

AH: Yeah, your little jobs around the house.

BW: Yeh.

AH: Aha.

SW: Did you?

BW: Yeah! Like you got –

SW: I thought it was just me that had them all! [laughter]

AH: Cos you were the youngest one, so. [laughter]

SW: No we had to keep our room tidy.

BW: Mm. Yeah but some – we would go up to – well, you went up to Crawford’s. [unclear]

SW: Yeh, and mah job was going to the baker’s, I used to go to the baker’s quite a lot.

BW: I was always gettin knocked down, so [laughter]

AH: Oh no! [laughs]

SW: Or else I wasn’t watchin her enough, an ma boyfriends were supposed to be watchin er.

AH: Ohh...

BW: Let me drop, fall off the swings an fall on ma heid.

SW: Fall off the swings an everything.

BW: So she smacked im.

SW: Ah smacked im.

AH: [laughs] Yeah.

SW: No Ah was beamin up, Ah wasn't looking after her, it was somebody else's job! [laughs]

AH: Well I suppose it was so safe, wasn't it? It was just kind of – you could chat to your friends and she'd be safe.

BW: Yeah it was. It was. It was very safe.

AH: And what about when you were, you stayed school and your – did you stay working in Musselburgh for your first jobs, your –

BW: No.

SW: No.

BW: No we went into Edinburgh for that.

AH: No, you went into Edinburgh for that.

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BW: Most people did.

AH: Oh right, OK.

BW: Most people did, yeah.

SW: Edinburgh was quite well-endowed with places to work, like the head office of Scottish Widows, the head office of Standard Life,

BW: It was lots of jobs.

SW: eh, big civil service, em, you know, ah Royal Bank, head office for Royal Bank, so there was lots of places that you could go an work.

BW: But there was even lawyers' office and independent insurance offices.

AH: Yeh.

BW: Loads o places you could work as well.

SW: There was, there was smaller places you could go an work as well.

BW: But office work.

AH: Office work, yeah.

SW: Yeah.

BW: And then in Musselburgh you had – well, you had the mills.

AH: Oh the mills?

BW: Because Dad worked in the mill before he went to the sea, he worked in the net mill didn't he?

SW: I think he had to be – he had to wait til he was fourteen an a bit or somethin.

BW: Before he could go to sea.

SW: That's what he wanted to do. I don't think he ever regretted it. Not, not one day.

BW: But Ah remember –

SW: Maybe when he livin through the freezin cold, but as a memory I don't think he would ever have wanted to do anythin else.

BW: But Ah remember, like, workin at the gas board down at Granton an comin back and you had all the bones and everybody would get off [SW laughs], you hed the bones o the fish market an it was all these different smells goin in the bus [laughs]. And then as you went along Leith as well, all the different places -

SW: And – yeah! Oh! All the different smells!

AH: On the close?

BW: Yes. Yes. [background chuckling]

AH: And were the buses always good links with the transport.

BW: Yes. Well –

SW: No we only had SMT.

BW: We only had SMT but you would get like me, I got the bus up to, em, York Place and then got the bus down. I would still have to do it that way.

AH: That's true, isn't it, yeah.

SW: The red buses, the red buses only went to, um –

BW: Eastfield.

SW: Eastfield. Or the bottom o the Milton Road.

BW: An turned and then [unclear]

SW: Because that was Edinburgh. They were only Edinburgh buses.

AH: Ohh....

SW: And we had –

BW: So it was great when they came all the way.

SW: East – was it? Eastern Scottish?

BW: Eastern Sco-ish.

SW: Or SMT, we – they were green buses and that's what we had.

BW: Mhm, which real– although East Coast is owned by Lothian Region, it was more

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like the East Coast buses.

AH: OK. OK yeah.

BW: Although they did go out – the buses didnae, they would – the green buses went to Wallyford and Whitecraig and all that.

SW: But the red buses never, they stopped.

BW: Mhm.

SW: They stopped at Eastfield.

AH: Mhm. That's incredible.

SW: Yes there was a turnin that's there at the Rockville.

BW: Mm.

AH: Funny. Yeah. And what about just your, your house and the location. Did you spend a lot of leisure in Musselburgh as well, you know, just goin out.

SW: When we were wee?

AH: Mhm.

BW: When we were kids, or?

AH: Yeah. Just in –

BW: Well ye had the cinema.

AH: Do you remember the cinema?

SW: Oh there was – how many cinemas was there again?

BW: That was em – oh gosh. But we only went to what's now David MacBeth but was Heewaist –

SW: The Hay Weights, but was there not one –

BW: That was David MacBeth Moyer

SW: No there was one up the top of [Dalrymple] Loan.

BW: Yeh that was eh, Playdays? Playhouse?

SW: Opposite the grammar. Playhouse, yeh. And there was another one sort of round about the bus station that I'm, can't remember ever going tuh.

BW: No I wasnae born then.

SW: Oh right. [BW chuckling] No it was be the Hay Weights we would go tuh.

BW: Yeah, we went to the Hay Weights.

SW: I never went to em, youth clubs, I don't think I did that

BW: I did.

SW: But Ah went to the Brownies and Ah went to the Guides.

BW: Mm, I went to Brownies and Guides. And then you went to – when we were young, we went to three Sunday Schools on a Sunday.

SW: Yeah. We were so lucky – we used to think we were so lucky.

BW: Cos you got three Christmas parties and you got three trips. [laughter]

SW: It wasn't, it wasn't until Ah was thinkin about you that Ah realised that there must've – that the times of the three Sunday Schools so that the kids – so that they could get a maximum amount o kids in their Sunday School. [laughs] And we used to think, oh this is so good, we've just got enough time to run round to the next one!

BW: Because they were all – we went to the Congregational, the Mission and Browns.

SW: Browns. Yeah.

BW: We ca'ed it Broonsies.

SW: Mm, Broons, so there was three, but there was – there were another two churches weren't there?

BW: There was the Sally Army.

SW: Oh and the Sally Army, but there was the Apostolic.

BW: Ah mebbe didn't go there.

SW: You know that –

BW: No I went to Sally – Ah went to get a tambourine, because Mum wouldn't buy me one.

Running time: 26.00

SW: Yeah. [laughter]

AH: You were quite clever about how you were gettin things that you wanted. That's amazing. That's amazing.

SW: But yeah, I never, I never went to youth clubs or anything like that. We did go to the, as many Sunday schools as we could get in an that. Oh an, oh an a Sa- [laughing], and then, on a Sunday afternoon after we'd had our lunch we'd all go –

BW: We, we'd walk.

SW: - and have our big meal at lunchtime and then we got chucked out because ma Dad used to go and have a lie down because they went away on the Sunday night and he was, an that was him, he didn't sleep after that so he'd still have a couple o hours on the Sunday afternoon. And while he was doin that ma Mum would bake somethin. Eh, she was a good baker, you know, bake a big sultana loaf or somethin but on a Sunday she might do scones or she might do scotch pancakes, or these horrible things that we were talkin about, they Empire Biscuits? [laughter]

BW: Ah like them! [laughter]

SW: Ah didn't like them.

AH: She made those did she?

SW: Well yeh –

BW: Oh yeh that's just japanetty biscuits wi some jam in!

SW: Oh she might make shortbread or something, you know. Or fairy buns – we quite liked fairy buns. She used to make a lot of just sponges and it was up to you if you put any jam or if you just et it like that, you know. But we were, we were chucked out on the, em, Sunday afternoon so that my Dad could have his wee sleep.

AH: Yeah.

SW: And used to go for walks. And wh –

BW: Ma favourite one was up the graveyard, we used to – [laughing]

AH: Up the graveyard?

BW: [laughing] Up the graveyard an [unclear] the gravestones! [laughter] And if it was rainin we'd sit in the toilet and eat our sweets, because there was a wee -

SW: Yeh because there was a wee –

BW: - a wee waitin room in the toilet and we'd sit in there.

SW: We'd sit in there and they were open, and they wouldn't be open today Ah'm tellin yeh!

AH: It's incredible isn't it.

SW: But sometimes –

BW: They were up the public park, there used to be a park.

SW: Oh and we were always asked where we had been, "where did yeh go to?" know – "Did ye get a good walk?" "Yeh" So this time we went up to Portobello, I walked er to Portobello –

AH: All the way up there?

SW: Oh that was not far. No.

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I had longer legs than her... [chuckling] Ah walked her to Portobello and went into eh the sort of auctions, there was a bit auction thing, um, and it was y'know, "Ah'm sellin this fer 25p" or whatever. And we put our hands up and the man said "No we're not sellin to you lot!" [laughter] Cos we were just kids. And we went and we spent our money and then –

BW: Was that ma day base?

SW: I don't know but we had – I must've had money so we got the bus back, right? Ah thought oh - must've spent longer wandering about and Ah mebbe didn't want them to know that we'd been at the auctions, I'm not sure, so we gets in – we got the usual "where have you been?" And Ah say "oh! We walked to Portobello!" And she said, "Oh! That's really good!" And this one pipes up, "Aye but we got the bus back!" [laughter]

BW: But we used to go to the Portobello swimmin baths because that was the nearest –

SW: The nearest, that was –

BW: That's the indoor one. An we used to keep our bus fares and had it planned out, all the sweetie shops on the way down, how much – we spend so much at this one and so much at this – [laughs] til you go home!

AH: So clever!

SW: But Ah'm sure ma Mum knew because we were – they opened at 8 o'clock in the mornin and it was really good to get in because it was like a piece of glass –

BW: Oh!

SW: - and if you were the first person in this water you broke it, right? So you were standin there waitin for them to open, you hardly had any clothes on but you had, you had a swimsuit underneath, you had the bare minimum of clothes on the top, you could just [whoosh] throw them off, run down and be the first one to burst the glass as we called it. And then we got – ah, did we have a drink, Ah can't remember if we had a drink, but –

BW: It was a hot orange.

SW: And a hot buttered roll.

BW: A hot buttered roll, hot orange and a hot buttered roll.

SW: So we had money and oh, it was good after all that salt on your mouth and up your nose, and you know –

BW: But we still had our bus fares.

SW: But we had our bus fares.

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And that's when *my* decision came out. Is that another hot buttered roll or am I gettin the bus home? The buttered roll always won.

AH: Always won. [laughs]

BW: Ah went, Ah used it on sweets. But there was lots of sweet, sweet shops –

AH: Sounds like it.

BW: - from Portobello baths to Musselburgh. Fae places you wouldn't even – now turned into houses so you wouldn't know it had been a sweet shop.

AH: Ohh.

SW: Yeah, there was, there was lots of – like, ours – at the bottom of our street was called Jennie Hannah's.

BW: It was a sweetie shop.

SW: I don't know who had it before Jennie Hannah. But it was Jennie Hannah an er sister and their niece came to stay with them and em they just stayed above it. And there was one window dedicated to penny things, you know penny sweeties for kids? And you'd go round there and they'd be all neatly displayed so ye saw everything that was there and you would mebbe have three pence,

three old pence, and you could get a sherbet dab for three old pence, but ye could get three penny dainties so you had to decide whether you wanted three penny dainties or the sherbet dab and then it would, you would be thinkin on it – oh and then there was the liquorice, that was quite good, the curly liquorice, I can't remember how many o those you got, or, if you didn't get the three penny dainties you could get the McGowans slab o toffee. And that was 3p as well but you never sort of got more than 3p, and you never got it every time ye asked.

AH: Right.

SW: And you used tuh – after you'd decided what you wanted you used to go and wait in the queue –

AH: Just so sweet, I can imagine all the young ones.

SW: And these poor women when Ah think about it, they used to shut on a Sunday afternoon – they were open every day, but on a Sunday afternoon they used to shut at half past two, and Ah can remember being sent down to knock on the door to ask them to open the shop because we had, because we didn't have something, whatever it was.

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BW: Remember Jackie Penman's? Which was on the opposite corner, and they sold sherry and you bought it – it was in a big, like, barrel? And it was poured int- and was it Nancy's weddin? You got, you were sent down to ask them to open the shop to get more drink. They run out o drink.

SW: And I was only seventeen at the time, so.

BW: [unclear] showin her presents! [? unclear]

SW: So this would, this shop, this shop wi Jackie Penman's was like Open All Hours.

BW: The smell, the spices an everythin as well.

SW: And d'you remember when it was old Open All Hours, the sh- when it was, what's his name? Ronnie...

BW: Barker?

SW: Ronnie Barker, right.

AH: OK.

SW: So it, the shop was just slightly different, and this shop smelt of –

BW: Spices an tea an stuff. But it was big sacks -

SW: - and tobacco, not tobacco, cigars. It was like, oh! Oh but it was a lovely, it was a lovely smell.

BW: But it was like big sacks of – y'know, things.

SW: Yeh. And he, and they –

BW: And he'd dip the scoop in.

AH: Ohh yes...

SW: The cheese slicer! Over it an everything -

AH: Really old fashioned.

SW: Yeah, it was really – the lovely, it was a lovely shop, you almost – and they had to us exotic things like jars o cherries, cocktail cherries an you'd "ohh!" and it was just sort of wonderful, this place. But yeah. It was, it must've been barrels o sherry and –

BW: And he poured it into bottles and stuff.

SW: Nancy's... My cousin had quite a big wedding and, em, everybody comes to see the presents and to bring presents and –

BW: And they all get a drink.

SW: And you get a drink and you get somethin to eat like sort o like afternoon tea but no. Em, and then you're shown all the presents, and ma aunt ran out o sherry. I was, I was sent down, em, to get it and Ah thought 'wull they give me it?' and eh, they knew who I was, so they knew, a but they knew Ah wasn't eighteen so Ah shouldn't be buyin the drink! [laughter] You know, everybody could figure out how old you

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were or from somebody else they knew who was the same age or whatever. You know, so they knew –

BW: Aye they knew yer parents anyway, they knew.

AH: Yeah.

SW: Aye, but I remember sayin my auntie Meg sent me down for - and Ah had –

BW: But Ah remember you talk about not bein able to – Ah remember you went to what was the Heeweights but used to be an off-licence before it was the Heeweights or Willie Orman's or whatever it's got, it's now that cash converter place.

SW: Was that no where Jackie Penman moved to?

BW: No. He moved over to the Christome place, no but.

SW: There was an off-licence there, you're right.

BW: I'm, I'm up there, and Ah can remember goin up there wi the EBs, that's our cousins, Elliot Bateman was her name, it was easier to say EB, em, and buying flagons o cider.

AH: Flagons?

BW: An carrying it down, between us. A flagon o cider.

SW: Yeah. Big jars.

BW: Big jars, yeah.

SW: Like a demijohn jug.

AH: Right. And they just filled it up for you, they just –

BW: You took the old one back and they filled up the new one, I think. I remember that, aye.

SW: Yeah, I think, yeah, yeah.

AH: Oh that's quite good.

SW: But we were, but we were told to go and do it for –

BW: We were only kids!

SW: We were kids!

AH: Oh right, yeah! They, they sold it to you?

SW: Ah but they knew it wasn't for us.

AH: Right. And they knew you weren't going to go out and drink –

BW: No, no! Well -

SW: Well, somehow they knew that without, without us having to say. It's weird, but.

BW: Cos [unclear] and I could only have been six or seven.

SW: I know!

AH: And but and you went to –

SW: No, we would all go.

AH: As a group, yeah, uh-huh.

BW: As a group because there was four of them and two of us.

AH: Right, but still.

BW: They'd come. They came over from -

SW: Well the oldest of these ones would only be twelve.

BW: Like I can remember when they came. Cos they came over from Hong Kong. And they arrived on our doorstep one morning. Um, just, mainly – that was six kids, five adults in a three bedroomed house.

SW: It was a big house.

BW: They were big rooms, but remember – like we used to sleep on the – during the week we used to sleep with Mum but the weekends we used to sleep in a line on the floor.

SW: Because my Dad -

BW: And they had my Gran there – no there was five adults there because my Gran stayed there as well

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and we all slept, like everybody was sleeping head to toe, aa.

SW: We had two sittings for food.

BW: We did.

SW: Kids went first.

BW: And Ah used to think when will Ah be old enough to get a fish supper? [laughter] Cos aa we ever got was to share a bag o chips.

SW: No, it was – oh yeah, I think so, so did we never get haggis?

BW: We used to get a bit o Dad's fish. Things like that. No we wouldnae ha got – it was far too expensive to buy it for everybody.

SW: Yeah for all these kids and aa.

AH: Yeah... That was a real treat, I can imagine you looking forward to that.

BW: We got cake – cake on a Saturday and we all used to cut it into wee bits and share it, so ye got a bit o everybody else's cake.

AH: See you didn't mind, did you, you just – it's what you knew –

BW: Swapped it a bit.

SW: Oh no no no no, if anybody, if anybody got the wee truffle, which was this size, nobody wanted to share wi them cos you wouldn't get that cut into six. So the person – if anybody was silly enough to get the truffle, they didn't share at all! [laughter]

AH: Had it worked out.

SW: "No, how... that in six pieces, never! I'm not eatin – Ah'm not givin you that an you're givin that!" So the truffles weren't eaten, weren't bought very often, I think.

AH: No, no...

BW: A lot of our childhood was spent wi them as well.

AH: Yes. Sound like a – you know, a big family there with your cousins and, and –

BW: Yeah. And then they moved away down to Manchester when I was about nine.

AH: Right. So they, they'd come from Hong Kong, they'd been living there?

SW: Our, our uncle was in the, the army.

AH: Ah, kay...

BW: An then they moved to as I say Manchester. Now they're all over. Laura, who's ages with my sister, is back up stayin in Edinburgh.

AH: So your family's all spread out?

BW: Yeh.

SW: Our – we've got –

BW: On my Mum's side.

SW: - we've got two – that's my Mum's side, my Mum wasn't Fisher, it was our Dad that was Fisher, and out Dad's side were near us, they were all sort of round about, eh...

BW: But my Mum came from Kilmarnock, so all her family, they used to come through on holiday.

SW: Her cousins and things like that.

BW: They would come through on holiday and stay with my Mum.

AH: Oh nice.

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BW: Some o them came on honeymoon an stayed wi my Mum!

SW: Yeah, that's true.

AH: Ahh! Aww.

SW: But where we stayed as well, we had outbuildings and – I don't know if you've walked along the Prom and you look down and you see the white, the white building?

AH: Yes.

BW: Whitewash.

AH: Oh! That – yeah!

SW: That's where we stayed.

AH: That's lovely, that's such a lovely place tuh grow up.

SW: And it was all – and like, all the men looked after the close. They would whitewash it and they would paint aa the doors and a big discussion about which –

BW: Scrub it.

SW: Scrub it, yeah, a big discussion when if they were changing the colour of the doors, it went from – there was a navy blue, there was a red and green. And that was -

BW: We were green.

SW: No but, most, most it was green but they sometimes they'd decide, um, to change it –

BW: Green and black.

SW: - but they looked after it all -

AH: Yeah.

SW: - and it was funny because a neighbour of my Mum and Dad's, em, he always told the story about, um, they had moved in in December and it was Hogmanay, it was eight o'clock in the mornin, and he could hear this running water. And he said "What's that?" and he looked out, he said there was my Dad, ma uncle, m'uncle Mike in their – what we would call their sea bits, but sea boots, the big heavy boots up to here, and the hoses hosing – at eight o'clock in the morning – hosing down the close for new year.

AH: Ahh.

SW: And he said –

BW: Everything had to be cleaned for new year.

SW: Everything had to be cleaned and Ah think, Ah think he worked out that ma Dad was eighty and ma uncle Mike woulda been eighty-six, eighty-seven?

BW: - Seven. Somehin like that

SW: He said, and he said "Oh I couldn't leave these, these old men to do it on their own!" so he said "I had to get up out ma bed and down and help!" [laughing]

AH: Oh no!

SW: They didn't want any help, that was –

AH: That was the way they did it.

BW: That's what they did.

SW: Yeah, so they used to keep it really nice. And sometimes we were allowed to play in certain bits. We were allowed to play in the wash house.

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Em, what happened is, each o the houses had a coal cellar, where you would originally put your coal, and there was – in our bit there was two wash houses and that was, two houses had one wash house.

BW: A shed, mhm.

AH: Right.

SW: And then on top there was something called the capper house, now –

BW: That's where they tarred the nets.

SW: - where they tarred the nets, right, so the nets didn't rot in the salt water. I can never remember –

BW: And the loft as well where they used to keep the nets.

SW: Yeah, I can never remember anybody tarrin nets so I think by the time we came along –

BW: It was a big drum thing, a big -

SW: There was a –

BW: Remember a big like stone, a big thing.

SW: - yeah and it did have a tarry smell to it at the back.

BW: Mhm.

SW: I don't think they actually did it, I think by that time the nets came tarred, or pre-tarred, whatever, the rope was. An then above where these wash houses and the coal cellars was there was a loft. And there was two bits. And eh, it was a bit in the middle and a step up and a step up and it was supposed to be one house's nets were on that side and one house's nets were on the other side. And it had this wee rickety ladder goin up to it. Uh, and we used to get to play in there sometimes, we weren't allowed to play it all the time, we played in the wash house more often.

BW: But then, we were the only close that had three houses. [SW chuckles] Because Teeny – there was Teeny and old Teeny down the stairs, so they had their own loft an there own, eh, coal cellar and wash house and that.

SW: What –

AH: So you shared?

SW: Like when – you had –

BW: There was the house at the bottom and then two houses up.

SW: - when the houses were built, em, there was like... two small houses and two bigger houses upstairs, then it was ours, but we – and we had three small houses, and three bigger houses. And the next one only had –

BW: One.

SW: - one small house, and one, because when the houses were built the person that

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-the extra person that came in with us didn't speak, seeminly, to the people that were goin in the one that was on its own.

BW: The single one.

AH: Oh!

SW: The single one. So they built the wall so that they were actually in with us, so we had three – they had fallen out, I don't know how many [laughing] centuries ago!

BW: It's the only one that's got three.

SW: So - and this one's only got the one, so it makes it, it made it slightly smaller.

AH: Yeah.

SW: But they didn't care. There were comin in wi us an that was it.

AH: How interesting.

SW: And oh, and they spoke to – or they were, they were related to us but they didn't speak to the people next door. And then the last close, that was just the same as the one at the top – wi the two downstairs and one above, but that, and we had the –

AH: So that's where you had the houses, yes.

SW: Three, yeh.

AH: Amazing.

SW: And we were told that about fifty odd years after it happened. [laughter] As if it happened -

AH: Just like a day – just the other day!

SW: Yeah, last week! Y'know.

AH: That's amazing. Um, well thank you very much. I've taken quite a long time from you! But this is perfect. Um, I just wanted to ask if there's anything else you'd like to say...? Anything you'd like tuh...

BW: I don't think so.

SW: Like, there was, there was one thing my Dad said about Fisherrow, em... We were, I was talking to him and Betty's middle name is Millar with an A, M I L L A R, not E R. So A R is the Dutch way of spelling it.

AH: Ohh...

SW: Right?

BW: Ah didn't know that.

SW: So what... the story went that we were descended from Dutch people that came over to Fisherrow to actually em, fish from there so, there were Dutch blood in us and that's where the Millar came from.

AH: Millar, OK.

SW: Millar, came all the way down.

BW: But I was named after

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ma... paternal grandmother. Ma Dad's Mum.

AH: Right.

SW: So ma Dad was tellin me this story and he said "your Grannie Watson's" which was that –

BW: But her name was Elizabeth.

AH: Elizabeth.

BW: But Ah got christened Betty.

AH: [chuckling]

SW: And em, he says, "Your Grannie Watson" – which was that – "her folks were supposed tae have come over from, em, Holland in about 1540." Ah went, "Really?" He says "aye," he says, "but yer Granda Watson's people were incomers!" [BW laughs] I said "Oh really!" He said "yeah" he said, "see and they came down from Perth around 1800." [laughter]

BW: From Perth!

AH: Incomers from Perth! Yes!

SW: Now you're talking, you're talking almost two centuries on, but he still was referring to them in the old way as incomers. They were perfectly, they were perfectly, erm, Musselburgh or Fisherrow through and through, but tellin me about the ancestors, erm...

AH: Yeah. And you've never kind of investigated further about that Dutch connection?

BW: No, no, no.

SW: Ma cousin Nancy's went back, but -

BW: Ah bet she'd done it on her Dad's side which is Fairlie.

SW: Oh did she not do it one the Wat–

BW: She didn't do it on the Watson side.

AH: Cos that's interesting because obviously that would make sense because there's so many Dutch people and they're keen fishers, weren't they, fisherfolk, so that's – and Leith was full of Dutch people, wasn't it, just aa this kind of mix of people coming in from Europe and... it would make sense, really.

SW: I think Millar, I think that spelling is the Dutch way, A R.

AH: That's interesting.

SW: It's not E R.

AH: Yeah, so it's quite a lot of integration, you know, people coming in in waves, hundreds ago – of years ago, you were saying. Ah, that's really fascinating.

SW: And it was when he said that to me and I burst out laughing and he said "yes, hen! They were!" He didn't realise what he had said!

AH: Yeahh. Well there's

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some scope there for some digging around in the family history there, that's so interesting. Um well that's really, it's been a pleasure to hear you and your stories and just hear about your memories. And I'm delighted that this will be included as part of the East Lothian archive because it's such a valuable record. And just think about it, Betty, all the future archivists coming, ah, coming to -