

Interviewee(s): George Montgomery (GM)	Interviewer(s): Judith McNeill (JM)
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REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Longniddry

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00.00

(A dog is barking intermittently in the background)

JM: Say a little something.

GM: My, my name again?

JM: Hmm.

GM: George Montgomery, [REDACTED], Longniddry.

JM: OK.

GM: In 1936 we arrived back home at with my maternal granny and grandfather because my father had died when I was just a year old. However then the, the main thing that attracted me was a: the railways.

JM: Yes.

GM: [Unclear] But apart next to the railway was the new dual carriageway and that was the first dual carriageway in Scotland.

JM: OK.

GM: It opened in 1936.

JM: Just move my chair over.

GM: And as I got a toddler I managed to get up the farm road, but not; there was a barrier across because my wee short leggies, right?

JM: And how old were you at that time?

GM: I was, I was three-year-old.

JM: Three years old.

GM: Just a toddler. But as I, as I got on, got bigger I used to sit up on the strainin' posts and watch the trains passin' and all the traffic because it was, it was new to me a, a.

JM: Yeah?

GM: A, a wee boy; anyway, as time went on I heard my mum and my granny and grandfather talkin' about this war. I didn't know what a war was.

JM: Yeah.

GM: But it kept, I kept on and it was buzzin' in my head and in due course when I was about five or six, well I was six-year-old when the war started. But just prior to the, the war startin', there was poles, tall poles put along the grass centre.

JM: Oh right.

GM: On the dual carriageway.

JM: Oh, oh aye.

GM: I didn't know what we, aye; I didn't understand I just watched then men puttin' the poles in.

JM: Yeah simply fine.

GM: Now these, these poles were something about 25 to 30 feet high.

JM: Right.

GM: And were a single line o' them right along the grass [00.02] o' the dual carriageway.

JM: OK.

GM: At that time I didn't know why, but I'll tell you later on.

JM: Tell, you can tell me.

GM: Anyway, that happened and I didn't know and we'd a great big sign at the farm *Seton Mains Farm* William Bruce and Sons was the farmer and aw the produce that he prod, that he was sellin'.

JM: Yeah.

GM: That was taken down! They removed it and; a six-year-old, it just came doon.

JM: Yeah.

GM: However, in due course that came down and we found out, I can't remember why, but we found out that they started takin' the names off the roads right, identifying the roads.

JM: Oh right, OK yeah oh I would be lost.

GM: Now all the roads were, aw the name plates were takin' off the roads. As time went on things were changin', my grandfather kept on sayin' to Nan, my sister, and I "When the siren goes into the house. You must come into the house when the siren goes". And it was a doub, a, a two storey house and he says "You'll sit under the staircase".

JM: Right.

GM: Close walls.

JM: OK and.

GM: And sit under the staircase.

JM: Can I go back just a second because I don't think that we captured in the tape the bit about why you were living at *Seton Mains*.

GM: Well, well, the.

JM: Just, just very quickly if you can just go back [unclear].

GM: The, the reason I was livin' at Seton Mains is I was born in 1933 and my father died in 1934. And mum was a; she, she had trained as a cook.

JM: Yes.

GM: Right? And she was workin' for farmers in farm houses when they had an event she was there tae do the cookin'.

JM: [Unclear] she was there, ah nice.

GM: But the money wasn't comin' in.

JM: Yeah?

GM: Which was a 30 shillin' a week, is it 30 shillin' a week or 30 shill, 30 shillin' a month, must've been a week.

JM: Must, I don't know, you, you know better than me.

GM: Aye a 30 shillin' a week pension at that time.

JM: Yes, yes.

GM: And she couldn't keep on and of course so I had to come back home so that's why I go back [00.04] to back to [unclear].

JM: That's you back. And it was you and your sister wasn't it with your mum?

GM: Yes.

JM: Right, sorry I interrupted; so yes.

(Mechanical voice in the background "The time is two o'clock here")

GM: Right.

JM: Given a fright!

GM: So, where did we get tae; oh the poles were all up.

JM: Yes.

GM: And the sirens were; they practiced on the sirens round about here. It was great for, for me and my sister, oh whoa, we didn't understand what sirens where for. Anyway grandpa's keeping us right and must when the sirens go you must get in the house, right. Now the next thing what, that we, we understood was this we had to have identification.

JM: Yes?

GM: During the wartime.

JM: OK.

GM: So got out a card for round your neck wi' your name, your address and a number. You also got a disk.

JM: Yes?

GM: To put round your neck like, like that, that two shilling piece you remember I sort [unclear].

JM: Yes, so sort of, yeah.

GM: And the name and address was on that and there was a number. And that number I've never forgotten SCPL987.

JM: Oh George you remember it.

GM: Now some got, some of your colleagues'll be able, or somewhere will be able to tell you what the two, the first letters were for.

JM: Yes.

GM: I suss, I suspect over the years the SC was for Scotland.

JM: Hm-mm that would make sense to me.

GM: PL Preston Lodge was the main post office.

JM: Right.

GM: This was a branch so it was PL.

JM: Yeah.

GM: Prestonpans for delivery.

JM: Prestonpans, yes.

GM: Nine eight was the number of families in the area and I was number seven in number eight.

JM: You know so it all.

GM: But understand?

JM: Yes, no.

GM: So I got the SCPL Longniddry or Scotland.

JM: Yes.

GM: Prestonpans Longniddry nine eight was Seton Mains.

JM: Yeah.

GM: And seven, I was the seventh in the family. [00.06]

JM: [Unclear] so they could send you back?

GM: Well if anything happened.

JM: Yes. They knew who you were.

GM: Well so if there's a bomb dropped across the road.

JM: Yes. Literally.

GM: Literally everything's there, but that card everywhere you went now this was a restricted zone.

JM: Oh!

GM: It was very restricted East Lothian. You could get out.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: But you couldn't get in. There was barricades at Wallyford on the main, on the A198.

JM: Yes.

GM: There was barricades on the A, the old A1 at Dolphinstone Farm.

JM: Right. Ah-ha, ah-ha, yeah.

GM: There was built, there was barricades at Levenhall at the bottom.

JM: Hm-mm no I know where you mean, yeah.

GM: Barricades now these where right across the road, concrete barricades and they were manned by the army.

JM: Ooh!

GM: And you, as I say you could get oot because you were wi'.

JM: Yeah the you were, right, yeah.

GM: You were, you were a local you could get out. But when you came in irrespective where you're at bus got stopped. The army came in the soldiers came in identification.

JM: And they went round everyone?

GM: And the reason for that I gather for later on there was Macmerry aerodrome, there was Drem . . . aerodrome.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And there was . . . the, the, the harbour at Port Seton.

JM: Yes?

GM: And this was to keep; this and Haddington there was also an airstrip at Haddington.

JM: Right, so?

GM: And, and you know where Lennoxlove is at Haddington?

JM: I do, I do.

GM: There was an airstrip coming right across the Gifford road.

JM: OK, yes.

GM: And if a damaged plane came in from the wartime and it needed repairs, they closed that road.

JM: Right so that it could get.

GM: So it could get along, along the strip just south o' Lennoxlove estate.

JM: Yes, so they could land.

GM: That's a lot o' useless information for yea.

JM: No it's not useless it's fabulous.

GM: Right. And we had Gosford Camp.

JM: Ah-ha, yes [unclear].

GM: And we had Haddington Amisfield Camp.

JM: Right.

GM: So that was army. The station it wasn't a station then it was a junction. [00.08]

JM: Right, OK.

GM: Longniddry Junction: the reason for that is because it was the first junction on the London line from the Waverly.

JM: Yes.

GM: And at Haddington line was a single line to Haddington, there was a single line frae Aberlady, Gullane and North Berwick.

JM: OK.

GM: And the, the, the porter, the foreman porter who could, I can always remember when the train stopped up there you could hear him . . . shoutin' "Longniddry change for Haddington, Aberlady, Gullane and North Berwick". And . . . it, you know, then you heard the all the carriage doors slammin'. However that's, that's, that's beside the wartime.

JM: Yes, no, no, that's, that's.

GM: That's beside the wartime. Now, the next thing that I, I, I got involved, oh I didnae get involved, that I noticed - the defence blocks.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Along the coast.

JM: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

GM: That's the big blocks, there's still some there, there's still some there.

JM: I know the one, yes. Some of them are still, still, still some there, yeah.

GM: Anyway that was, that was a, a fascination for me because it was great big machinery that, that cement, commercial cement mixers. They were about 15 or 20 feet high.

JM: And you were a boy at a young age!

GM: And, and the road, I can't remember where it; on the coast road it was closed for some months. Now I can't remember exactly where, but it was, it was if I can remember it was from Seton Mains . . . back road frae Seton Mains up to the steading from the coast road, that east of that to the Dean Road (Longniddry) was closed completely. It was; right across the road there was great big piles o' concrete chips and bot and, and wood timber for making these, these concrete blocks. And these concrete blocks where, they, they were made from Port Seton to Aberlady Point.

JM: OK, yeah.

GM: And it all worked frae there [00.10] so that, that was a closure.

JM: Yes [unclear].

GM: Now where we after that what; the sirens when the sirens came on we could, we could identify the Longniddry siren, we could identify Tranent siren.

JM: Yes.

GM: We could identify Port Seton siren. Now these sirens were in the police offices or outside the police offices.

JM: Right, right, yes.

GM: However, there was one odd one and we could never understand, I could, I could never understand what was wrong. There was one odd one because, as I say, Port Seton we could identify, Prestonpans one but there was an odd one somewhere and it was, it was, you know the sirens went were a moan.

JM: Yes no you were getting the.

GM: But there was an odd one and it was a flutterer.

JM: Oh!

GM: See and I could never, we could never understand. I said "Oh what how's that. Why that's different, why's that different".

JM: Yeah why's that different?

GM: It was, it was driven by steam and it was from the Links Pit at, at Prestonpans.

JM: Yes [unclear].

GM: And I, we spoke about that not a long time after that and I says "I didn't know, I didnae know about" he says "That's Port Seton that's the Links Pit". And you can find out further more. So, let's get back to this.

JM: No love the fact that you've identified the different sirens from the different areas.

GM: Let's, let's get back to what happened; oh the shelters were being made Anderson shelters for the houses.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: And, and . . . oh dear.

JM: All right, don't worry. So Anderson shelters were getting made. Did you know someone who had one?

GM: What?

JM: An Anderson shelter.

GM: Oh for, oh for we came in, in then we for, in, in eventually came into the village in 1953 there was still an Anderson shelter in our back garden.

JM: There you go.

GM: 1953!

JM: 1953 they were well built.

GM: Right, so, now what else sorry oh yes Gosford, Gosford Camp. Now the artillery regiment was in [00.12] Gosford Camp and this was great for me because they did ...manoeuvres, troop movements round about here, right?

JM: Yeah, there practising.

GM: Bren carriers, Bren gun carriers.

JM: Right.

GM: And when they put the concrete blocks up they left a gap and it's still down at the coast there, just below the golf course.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: And it's, it was a, a, a tide protection gap; a ramp, rocks and goodness knows what.

JM: Yes, eh can we not?

GM: And they didn't put concrete blocks there, right?

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And of course my grandfather says "One day he was, he's come along the coast road on a bike" and he says "Guess what happened" he says "They got concrete blocks right from here to Aberlady Point" and he says "The ramp at bottom of Longniddry" which is called Boglehill.

JM: Right, Boglehill, OK.

GM: "The ramp at Longniddry the Bren carriers were going up it, there're coming up on the main road". Somebody said there's no blocks there (blows a raspberry) up the west.

JM: It's great.

GM: Oh it was great fun. However, the, the some more about the military side; there was a gun emplacement.

JM: Right.

GM: At the bottom of the Dean Road.

JM: Hm-mm yeah.

GM: High up when you go down the, the old Dean Road if you look to the left when you come to by the trees on the wood, the wood, the wood.

JM: Yes, yeah.

GM: If you look high up there's a banking high up, and there was a gun emplacement there. Now twice or thrice I got chased wi' one o' my pals [unclear].

JM: I can't imagine that George!

GM: We were down in runnin' round about the; it was all dug out see and we're aw runnin' about there and a man wi' an army uniform came in and he's got tabs on his collar "Get out of here, why are you in here?" We were fighting the Germans.

JM: And how old do you think you were at roughly about that time?

GM: I'd be about what [00.14] . . . six or seven.

JM: Six or seven oh yeah just at the peak time for nonsense.

GM: Right, there so there was, that was a gun site there.

JM: Yes.

GM: There was a site at Longniddry Station.

JM: Oh yeah, yeah.

GM: Low down in the wall of Gosford Estate.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And . . . I haven't been along there for quite some time, but the last time I looked the still, the lintel was still in the wall. It had been blocked up.

JM: Yeah.

GM: The hole had been filled up but the lintel was still there.

JM: The lintel was still in place.

GM: And that there was, I, I, I if I can remember rightly, there was three gun points and a flame-thrower.

JM: Oh!

GM: And that was protecting Drem.

JM: Right.

GM: Airfield.

JM: Yes.

GM: So, they also had a tank engine.

JM: Yes? [Unclear]

GM: At Longniddry Station and that went all round East Lothian.

JM: Right.

GM: Pullin' the train wi', pullin' a, a, a carriage, a gun carriage all round East Lothian.

JM: (An aside) We're keeping it going.

GM: And it was the tank engine. And the tank, the tank engine driver, I mean, he, he was a, an army person, but he ended up like a, a, a, a train driver's uniform on, but all round East Lothian.

JM: Going round and round ah.

GM: But, so, that, that was, these were the sort o' things that stick in my mind.

JM: Yes.

GM: There was the, the aeroplanes at Macmerry were Lysanders.

JM: OK.

GM: And these planes were they, they, they take a short runway to take off; there was no runway at Macmerry it was a grass field.

JM: So it was just a quick.

GM: So, and it, they were quick they were easy lifted off.

JM: Yes.

GM: And it was a short landing strip as well. So Lysanders there was a whole squadron of Lysanders there. Drem on the other hand was (Supermarine) Spitfires, Spitfires and (Hawker) Hurricanes and, and I cannae mind the other ones.

JM: So.

GM: So.

JM: OK, so did they need a bigger long [00.16] a longer runway to take off is that why they weren't at Macmerry?

GM: Yes, right, but aye, and that was a grass, that was a grass park as well, a grass field as well.

JM: See I'm catching up. Right.

GM: So, so there we are we're, we're building up a story about my rem, my memories, now.

JM: Yeah, it's beautiful.

GM: At Port Seton, at the harbour at Port Seton or the east pier there was a hole in the wall.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And there was a cannon sticking, rolled out there and there was a target on the, in the water in, in the Forth.

JM: OK.

GM: A target there and every Wednesday the Royal Navy came down and they were target practicing on that target. And I, we as a, as a, again back as a boy I can remember all that; I can remember watching for we knew that it was goin' to happen on a Wednesday and was back up at the farm and you could look right across to the water to Port Seton. And many's, many, many times the target disappeared.

JM: Success.

GM: They werenae supposed to hit the target they were to aim to a certain area, a certain an, angle away.

JM: They were to aim, yeah within a distance. Yes.

GM: But quite often two or three shots and the target disappeared. And it, it was “Oh you’ve done it this time”. However, there you are now getting on where’s the war, when the war was, when the war started . . . again we were getting sirens and blackouts and at the farm the farm workers had a job to do at night time.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: Two men had to walk round aw the, the cotter’s houses watching for blackouts, watching for curtains, open curtains.

JM: Oh yeah just little, little.

GM: Another two, another four men were on fire watch.

JM: Right.

GM: Round the steadin’; that all interested us because it was us youngsters, it was something new, something new you see.

JM: Yeah of, and something totally [00.18] different!

GM: And, so let’s gettin’ back to the war startin’.

JM: Well I was going to ask you what kinda, what was your house like in one of the, did you live in one of the cottages on the farm?

GM: Oh it was a, it was a row of four houses, there was two rows o’ houses at, at Seton Mains. There was a row of four houses . . . north to south and there was a row o’ three houses east to west.

JM: Right, OK I’ve got the idea.

GM: But they were, they were separate.

JM: Yes.

GM: If you understand?

JM: They weren’t attached to each other [unclear].

GM: And there was a burn for playin’ in between them.

JM: Perfect.

GM: The wood with a burn and I was always getting’ soakin’ as a wee laddie.

JM: Yes. And always getting in trouble I imagine!

GM: I was gettin’ anyway the, the war started, of course, and . . . I can’t, I can’t, the build-up was . . . the dog-fight over here, there was a dog-fight over here.

JM: Yeah?

GM: Spitfires, now well just planes then.

JM: Yes, suit to, yes.

GM: But it turned out in due course it was, it was Spitfires frae Drem chasing German plane round about here.

JM: Yes?

GM: The plane, the Germans had been up and the; we said then or we'd, we heard then that they were aiming for the Forth Bridge.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: The Forth Bridge and Rosyth Dockyard. Now, the guns the, the army protection o' the village was . . . Cramond Island, Inchkeith, Inchmickery they are the ones that protected the, up there.

JM: They were protecting the Forth Road Bridge, railway.

GM: And you could, you could identify these three gun site, gun sites cos they were different guns.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: And if that was daytime and I was sittin' at the top again watchin' the trains still watchin' trains, somethin' new, and I was sittin' up there and siren [00.20] went and this (blows) round about, round about, round about and it was great.

JM: Wow.

GM: It was great, but when I went home at tea-time granddad says "And where were you've been". I says "I was watchin' the aeroplanes". And our trousers where taken off.

JM: Oh jeez!

GM: "You heard the siren?" "Aye, but, and, and, but, but, but I could see the aeroplanes, see". Trousers came down and I got a skelped backside.

JM: Oooh.

GM: "You were told siren into the house".

JM: I remember that you told me that already.

GM: Right, anyway into the house; so I got a row and it didn't make a great deal of difference. But because later I've got, I've got a week or a fortnight later, I can't remember just how long it was but there was gonnae be a family weddin' and granddad took me to Port Seton to get a haircut.

JM: What was the hair, do you remember what the hair, barber; I was going to say hairdresser, barbers.

GM: Aye, Pow . . . Willy Pow the barber in Cockenzie.

JM: Oh, OK.

GM: Right, so we went along cycled Seton Mains.

JM: Yeah.

GM: Along Port Seton got a haircut and we're sittin' in there and I, I was on the, on the chair get, getting' my hair cut; I was on the chair and sirens went. And Willy Pow went out to the door . . . barber out the door and he shouts "Come out and see this". And it was another dog-fight.

JM: (Very softly) Oh George.

GM: And the empty short sh, the empty sh cases, bullet cases were bouncing off Cockenzie High Street. And when all that started Willy said "Get back in, get back in, get back in". Now that crops up because; and getting' back to the weddin' the weddin' was to Haddington on the Saturday afternoon.

JM: Yes?

GM: And that's, that, that was the second; the first plane came doon at the May Island.

JM: Ah-ha, [00.22] right.

GM: That was the first one.

JM: Yes.

GM: The second one was at Kidlaw Farm at, at Humbie.

JM: Right, OK, yeah.

GM: So that was, that was a bomber.

JM: That was and it was down.

GM: And it was it came doon at Kidlaw.

JM: But the shell casing where on Cockenzie High Street.

GM: The, the shell cases were comin' up. They were bouncing off the street, ken?

JM: From the fight yeah because obviously there're coming down from the sky.

GM: Cos they have to go somewhere, I mean.

JM: Well, OK.

GM: They didnae I, I; the, the first raid I, you didnae notice them because it was a' soft earth they were landin' on.

JM: Yeah, but.

GM: But on the street ken (noise of falling shell cases). So there you are. What, but other that was.

JM: Do you remember who's wedding it was?

GM: Sorry?

JM: Do you remember who's wedding it was, for the family wedding?

GM: Oh it was my mother's cousin.

JM: Oh.

GM: Aye . . . a cousin, cousin, cousin.

JM: Cousin aaaah.

GM: Cousin, Daisy Watt. She was a Haddington girl, Daisy Watt and she married to Wullie Oxson and Wullie Oxson's . . . daughters had the Merryhatton Farm.

JM: Yes.

GM: Before it was the garden centre.

JM: Yes I know where you mean.

GM: A bit of useless information.

JM: No, and it's [unclear].

GM: Any, anyway let's go a wee bit further into the wartime.

JM: Yes.

GM: There were sirens, eh sorry searchlights.

JM: Right.

GM: And at that time we didn't know where the searchlights were stationed. But there was one raid and we're aw sittin', the whole lot o' us were sittin' under the stair, ken. And granddad went oot because he was . . . it was his turn to do fire watchin'.

JM: Right, [unclear].

GM: And he went oot the front gate . . . he came back in "Come and see this, come and see this" and we aw trooped oot; there's searchlights swinging all over the place, right?

JM: Yes.

GM: And they were pick, they could pick, they were pickin' up German planes and it was the Clydebank blitz planes.

JM: Yes, OK oh. [00.24]

GM: And they were aw goin' westwards. And we were oot there for about twenty minutes.

JM: Jeez oh watching them all flying in.

GM: Watchin' these searchlights, right. And about two hours, two hours or so later the planes came back and they were in the searchlights again. Now I don't know how many planes were missing if you understand me.

JM: Yeah, no, no, I get yea.

GM: But the planes you could see the planes.

JM: Yeah you could see, oh.

GM: And eventually we found out that there were two searchlight stations at Fidra.

JM: Right, ah-ha.

GM: There was one at . . . well there was one at Macmerry obviously at, at, near the airport, near the airfield.

JM: Ah-ha, right. Near the airfield.

GM: There was one at Pathhead.

JM: Right, yes, yeah.

GM: But you could, I mean they went for a lot of, great height the search, the beams.

JM: Lighting up the sky.

GM: And it, it was great ken. We thought anyway, thought I was seven or eight year old then what is going to happen next you ken.

JM: Yeah you're just a kid, yeah you're just a kid.

GM: And, and, and well that was that. Now bombs . . . bombs the first one's Cottyburn just up the road there between here and Haddington.

JM: Ah-ha on, just beside the Railway Walk as is ah-ha, ah-ha.

GM: Aye up the Railway Walk. Now if you go up there now is, the last time I was up there the hedge never grew where the bomb landed. There's still a gap in the hedge.

JM: Shall I get up.

GM: Up to about well three or four years ago.

JM: Yeah, right.

GM: That never, that hedge never grew. There was that there was a bomb landed at Mac, at Meadowmill.

JM: Uh-uh.

GM: And . . . a, an aunt and uncle and I, an aunt and uncle lived at Beanston Mains at . . . towards, east o' Haddington. And I used to; Nan and I used to go there holidays, the summer holidays. We had four weeks, Nan went four weeks and I, then I went the next four weeks.

JM: Yes?

GM: But there was one, because East Fortune was just becomin', but it was a trainin' station at East Fortune.

JM: Right.

GM: It trained aw the [00.26] naval pilots mainly, Fleet Air Arm, but there was one night the, the, the, the sirens went, and up to the back garden to see what was happenin'. And there was land mines dropped, land mines and two or three came down North Berwick Law.

JM: Mm-mm.

GM: And you could see them the sparks and everything comin' doon, rollin' doon the hill, North Berwick Law.

JM: Yes George, North Berwick Law think of that.

GM: Now were where we going now?

JM: Ah . . . and at this time George are you at school?

GM: I was at school?

JM: You're at school there.

GM: Aye.

JM: Whereabouts was the school?

GM: Sorry?

JM: Where was the school for Seton?

GM: Longniddry Primary School.

JM: As is just now?

GM: Aye. It, well Longniddry School was built in 1932.

JM: ... perfect timing for you attending.

GM: And.

JM: Some was cycle was made for you.

GM: There was no, there was no transport it was peddles; bikes.

JM: Right, so you're all cycling to get to there.

GM: From Seton Mains, right. So, and och.

JM: (Very softly) Oh well.

GM: What else, what else. Come on there must be some other things.

JM: Oh no I like; tell, tell me more about the school.

GM: Sorry?

JM: Tell me more about the school.

GM: The school?

JM: Who was you teacher?

GM: Oh the school the first teacher I had was Miss Campbell she was primary one.

JM: Primary one, oh.

GM: Miss Campbell and her father and mother had Longniddry Gardens.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: Longniddry Gardens.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

GM: And the second teacher . . . oooh now I cannae mind the name o' the primary two.

JM: That's all right.

GM: It'll maybe come.

JM: It might.

GM: Primary three . . . I cannae mind primary three either.

JM: I don't mind that either.

GM: Primary four was Miss Dunbar.

JM: Yes.

GM: And . . . primary seven was the headmistress (very softly) and she was a bitch.

JM: Oh ooooh.

GM: To let you understand when we came to the school first to primarys, primary [00.28] one if; she lived in the village here in Elcho Road.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: And when she was comin' to the village if we were walkin' or on the bikes.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: If she was on the main street walking frae Elcho Road to the school.

JM: Ah-ha to the school.

GM: You had to get off the bike or if you were walkin' off the pavement and go into the kerb.

JM: No!

GM: And salute her.

JM: Nooo! You had to salute. OK. Very different from what the primary schools like now!

GM: So, and one other thing and you might, dinnae take this the wrong way.

JM: I'm no taking it the wrong way.

GM: Girls could do nothing wrong.

JM: (Softly) Well.

GM: Girls could dae nothing wrong.

JM: (Very softly) Nothing wrong; what asking about.

GM: It was always us boys, (very softly) belt.

JM: (Very softly) Oh George.

GM: And there was one, one, one, one of my school mates in particular he was quite a character and his, his daughter still lives in, in, in John Knox Road . . . and he's, no his unc, his, his, his niece lives in John Knox Road.

JM: Knox Road.

GM: And he was always in to trouble and it's "Out here" and intae her drawer and, and you had to stand that way.

JM: (Softly) And get that ooh.

GM: Now when she gave you the belt it was down that way.

JM: (Gasps) Yes?

GM: And guess what to get that she stood astride, right?

JM: Oh so she's yes, so she's really putting in her force into it.

GM: And when he, when Frank was gettin' the belt he started "Oh I'm fed up with this nonsense". And eventually oot the, when the belt was comin' doon he did that. And you ken where the belt went?

JM: Aaah!

GM: And she just went raging mad. But, you know, that's a sort of besides that wasnae the war.

JM: Am not laughing, am I?

GM: Nothin' to do with the wartime, nothin' to do with the wartime.

JM: No, no but it's just an example of the things.

GM: However where did we get to; where did we get to.

JM: So we had the [00.30] land mines at North.

GM: The land mines at North Berwick.

JM: At North Berwick.

GM: I think there was three came down at North Berwick.

JM: Yes.

GM: And in the meantime if I can go back to the village?

JM: You can.

GM: The . . . the governor of Edinburgh Castle lived in Gosford Road.

JM: OK.

GM: Colonel Gordon.

JM: (Softly) Colonel Gordon.

GM: And my mother was cook for them.

JM: Yes.

GM: Then eventually worked for them [unclear]. They were wonder, wonderful people.

JM: Yes?

GM: They were wonderful, we often spoke about it and my mother used to say "These are the, that couple is the greatest couple" because she, she, she got help.

JM: Yes.

GM: She was daein' the work, she got help and they were always "How's Nan and George getting on?" and they used to takes us, Nan and I, tae the theatres in Edinburgh.

JM: Awe!

GM: But it was wonderful village.

JM: Yes.

GM: I mean, after we came into the village; came to the village in 1953 I started workin' in 1940, '49, '47.

JM: Right.

GM: I left the school 1945, '46 I started, no left the school at 1946 and I was the last to be allowed to leave at 14. Then the school leaving age went to 16.

JM: Went up to 16.

GM: And the, it, it, it came to the summer holidays and I says "Och I've got to go back to the school in September, ken (very softly) I didnae want to go back to school in Sept". (Speaks normally) I was in Preston Lodge then.

JM: Yes!

GM: And . . . the farmer at Seton Mains says to my grandfather "What's, what's the big yin goin' to do?" and gran' "Awe dinnae, I'm no' sure he's never talked about anythin'". And . . . the, the farmer says "He's never out that bloody garage" right?

JM: Yes.

GM: Up at the farm "And he's always in the passenger seat in the lorry".

JM: In the, of which [00.32] we've got a flavour of that you like that sort of thing already.

GM: So, and he says "I'll tell you what I'll make arrangements wi' somebody I know and see if we can get him a job". So, it came about that there was a, an appointment made for me to go to Alexander's in Edinburgh, Alexander's workshop in Edinburgh, agricultural engineers.

JM: Ah-ha I was going to say what kind of company maybe.

GM: "You'll get a job there".

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: "Go in and the man you've got to talk to is Mr Milne". And so it was a' arranged, got there and I got tae the, the workshop.

JM: How did you get there?

GM: The lorry driver, the lorry driver was goin' in for work for, for, for mid, mid farm...

JM: Yeah.

GM: produce.

JM: So they gave you a lift.

GM: The lorry he says "I'll take you in" and he dropped me off at Fountainbridge.

JM: Yes.

GM: Dropped me at Fountainbridge and “In that door there”. I went in and he of course the lorry went away. And he says went in there and this girl says “What can I do for you lad?” I say “I’ve to see Mr Milne” “Oh he’s busy”.

JM: Oh. That’s not a good start.

GM: “He’s a, he’s busy” I say “Aye a’ right”. Now two hours later.

JM: (Softly) Oh George.

GM: Two hours later I say “I’m not waiting any longer” and I walked oot the door. And when I looked along the street there’s a (Edinburgh) Corporation bus comin’.

JM: Yes.

GM: And it’s got on the billboards, on the destination board, North Bea eh . . . Easter Road. And I say to mysell “Oh Easter Road the North Berwick bus goes past Easter Road so if I get on that bus he’ll take me to Easter Road and I’ll get off there and I’ll get the North Berwick bus”.

(Voice in the background and the dog barks excitedly)

JM: And he’ll get that one.

GM: So I got on this bus.

Unkn: Right, enough, enough, enough.

GM: So that’s my daughter-in-law comin’ in. On the road and, and . . . and, and the bus it went away a different; I says “This is, I thought this, this says it’s goin’ tae, passed Easter Road?” [00.34] and the conductor says “Aye but there’s two ends to Easter Road son”.

JM: Oh no. Oh no.

GM: “We go round by Leith Docks” I say, I says “Oh let me off, let me off” I’ve got off and I walked down Canongate.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Doon Canongate and I’m looking aw round about, ken. I says “Oh aye” and I passed this street and a bus went in and it was just like as though it went through a wall. And when, as it’s goin’ in I say “That’s the colour o’ the bus that comes tae”.

JM: Yeah.

GM: “North Berwick” and I walked down there and, cos I, I thought, I thought it was the bus station.

JM: Yes, [unclear].

GM: Walked down there in the door and I got shouted at “Don’t come in here this is just for vehicles”. So I got run back out again “Go to the next door”, went tae the next door and the, the, the again man says “What, what’re you looking for boy?” I say “I’m, I’m I want to see if I can get a job as an apprentice”. “Go along to that office that glass fronted office along there and talk to the girls”. Went along there girl opened the window, sliding window, “What, what, what are you looking for?” I say “I want to get an apprenticeship” “That man’ll talk to you in about a couple of minutes he’s on the phone”. Man comes oot after a minute.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And his words were; I've never forgot them "What do you think I've got that you want" I say "I just want to be a, an apprentice".

JM: Please sir.

GM: "Oh right then tell me about yourself and that, what age are you?" I say "14" "Oh aye" and he's going "Oh well you see there's a problem ". I say "Oh" "There's a problem" "What's that?" I say, he says "You cannae start your apprenticeship 'til you're 16". I says "I dinnae want to be, go back to school again".

JM: Don't make me!

GM: And this was August.

JM: Yes so it was.

GM: You've got to start in September.

JM: Yeah, the time.

GM: See and, and, and he says "Oh wait a minute" [00.36] "What's your, what's, where do, where do you live, what's your address at home?" I, I telt him "Oh" he says "Well look would you like to be a message boy?" I say "I think so" well he says "There's a phone go, there's a phone number when you go home talk to your parents and ... phone me back".

JM: Yeah?

GM: Right so and I go away of course and come back ho, got back home again mum says "How'd you get on?" "Ooooh I cannae get a, be an apprentice 'til I'm 16" ah but I says "He, he, he, he said I could be a, a, a, message boy if I wanted to be a message boy". She says "Well there's nothin' wrong with that". Of course cash, see...

JM: Mm. Yeah of course so.

GM: She's got the cash as well you see so and Nan was workin' by then and of course . . . she got on the phone phoned Mr Dawson and he says "You could start on Monday, can you be here at eight o'clock on Monday mornin'" and my mother says "Oh that's a problem" "Why is that?" she says "The first bus from North Berwick passes here at seven o'clock.

JM: Yes?

GM: And she said "By the time it, it will, it'll be; you have to walk frae St Andrew Square to New Street.

JM: Down to there.

GM: So it will be after eight o'clock. "Don't worry about that" he says "His name we'll put a circle round his name on the clock". So I could walk in.

JM: Yeah.

GM: As soon as I got there they knew [unclear].

JM: They knew you were on the way.

GM: So that was me startin' workin'.

JM: Aaah and what did a, what did, I, forgive me what was a message boy doing, what did you do?

GM: A message boy . . . you . . . a message boy cycled all round Edinburgh gettin' parts small parts for the bus industry.

(In the background someone speaks and a door shuts)

JM: To bring them aaah.

GM: It was the bus company old SMT (Scottish Motor Traction).

JM: Yes.

Unkn: It's OK. (Voice continues in the background for a short while)

GM: And if it was small packages "George, go up and get a, a dozen packets of washers or bolts and nuts or whatever.

JM: Yeah things that were needed. [00.38]

GM: And it was, it was a butch, like a butcher's bike with a big basket on the front. Have you seen them? A big basket on the bike.

JM: I love that, yes on the back.

GM: And a bell and learned all the streets o' Edinburgh.

JM: And there's some steep hills in Edinburgh.

GM: There was 14 outside depots for the company.

(Door shuts in the background)

JM: Right, yeah.

GM: And if there were small parcels goin' to these depots they were put in my basket and I cycled to St Andrew Square put them on the appropriate bus goin' pass that depot.

JM: Yes going to that depot.

GM: And there was one day . . . there was one day there was a desperate need for a, a, a, a, a, an engine starter motor and they put in my basket and they says "Keep that up put it on a bus". I couldnae cycle wi' it it was too heavy so I pushed the bike aw the way from New Street.

JM: Yes.

GM: Over the Waverly Bridge up to St Andrew Square and by the time I got up to the top o' Waverly Bridge; the tram cars were still running on Waverly Bridge, right?

JM: Right, yeah.

GM: Along Princes Street.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And the policeman on points duty he, he saw me comin' up wi' the bike and the bike had SMT diamond on the, either side o' the frame.

JM: On, on the sort of on the frame.

GM: And, and “Come on, come on you come next” and of course I’m goin’ across and guess what the front wheel caught on the rail in the, in the tramline. And the bike, the bike went up its end, the starter came out and rolled away along the road.

JM: (Very softly) Oh George, George. (Possibly another attendee?)

GM: See and policeman’s shoutin’ and bawlin’ “Come on get your oot o’ there”. And the tramcars are, the tramcars used to dang on the front wheels.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: Dingin’ and there was tramcars at one side and tramcars at the other side and “Hurry up”. And I had to get up; I fell o’er the bike and eventually got up sorted, sorted mysell got the, the, the other side o’ Princes Street and come back for the starter put it in the basket. And, and it, it was, it was a, it went on for a long time they kept on everybody in the depot knew about it. [00.40]

JM: They never let it lay, lie they didn’t just say “Oh forget about that it was a wee mistake”?

GM: Naw, naw it was somit. However goin’ back, getting’ back to my, my workin’ life.

JM: Oh dear.

GM: Forty-seven and a half years.

JM: Forty-seven and a half years?

GM: It’s a, a.

JM: So, so after the message boy.

GM: Well.

JM: Did you then get the apprenticeship?

GM: I got my apprenticeship when I see the, the, it was a, the apprenticeships in that company were six months cycle.

JM: Yes.

GM: So, after six months a, a, a lad came in and took over my, the, the push bike. And after another six months I went in Stores.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: At that time and then I was ready 16.

JM: That got you into the age.

GM: So, served my five year apprenticeship.

JM: Right.

GM: And I went frae message boy and finished up third from the top.

JM: Ah there you go.

GM: But that's, that's nothin' to dae wi, wi' the, but, but gettin' back to the village here it was a great place to live.

JM: Yes.

GM: And we had the prisoners of war doon there as well.

JM: Down there. So you were a message boy and then you did your apprenticeship. And what, I was wondering what kind of things you did your apprenticeship in?

GM: Eng, engineers.

JM: Engineering.

GM: Bus engineers.

JM: Yes.

GM: And I went aw through the workshop. But gettin' back to the, the, the, the village here it was a great place to because we were, we were near to Macmerry and the officers mess was St Germain's House.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: A wee story there.

JM: Tell me.

GM: When the bus came doon frae Macmerry under the bridge, the Lorne Bridge, along frae, halfway along the dual carriageway and went across the final crossin'.

JM: Ah-ha, yeah.

GM: And the, the, the, the gateman was notorious and twice or thrice he caught the bus halfway over the, the railway and he shut the gates – jammed the bus. And there was one time all hell got let loose because there was a train comin' up from Longniddry.

JM: Right.

GM: There's a curve at Cantyhall just along there.

JM: Yes.

GM: And the [00.42] bus was trapped between the two gates and that train was at, at Cantyhall, but, but these, these are the funny things that happen, you know.

JM: Yeah of course, course.

GM: Oh. And of course the worst thing o' the lot was Ferny Ness.

JM: Oh?

GM: The plane, air crash at Fern, Ferny Ness doon there.

JM: Right, OK I don't know anything about that.

GM: And goin' back to school time again.

JM: It's alright.

GM: And . . . during the wartime there was a target a plane pulled a target, a drogue you know what a drogue is?

JM: No, tell me.

GM: Air sock.

JM: Right.

GM: At, at an airfield.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: But it was turned round about.

JM: OK.

GM: So that the open . . . was free.

JM: Yeah.

GM: Was being free pulled first.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And the . . . it was a . . . a fabric . . . target and it used to fly roond aboot, roond aboot, roond and this was the, the Royal Navy gunners.

JM: Yes.

GM: Gunnin' station, firing station doon at Ferny Ness. And we used to watch that regularly as laddies and it always came across Seton Mains. And there was two or three times because the plane turned; if it turned quickly that tight.

JM: Ah-ha yeah.

GM: The drogue came down. And two or three times two o' my pals at the farm ran after it. Can you imagine what would happen if we'd been caught on it.

JM: [Unclear]

GM: You ken? Oh dear so that was rows in the hoose of course.

JM: Of, well of course.

GM: But, anyway this particular day in up in the back garden and the black burns [drogue] is goin' roond aboot, roond aboot with [unclear] . . . and it . . . the behind the wood I couldn't see what happened.

JM: Yeah.

GM: But if I walked a wee bit passed the garden there was a great big plume o' smoke.

JM: Right.

GM: And I ran into the hoose and said to my granny "There's somit happened, there's somit happened, there's somit happened" no idea what it was just.

JM: Yes.

GM: "There's somit happened, there's somit happened" "What's wrong?" I says [00.44] "There's an awful lot o' smoke come and see aw this smoke". And . . . oh it was disaster . . . the plane come, comin' round the, to drop the drogue.

JM: Yes.

GM: And it hit the bus, there was a bus waiting to take the, the naval personnel back tae Queen, South Queensferry.

JM: Right, so that they all gone out the way.

GM: And the, I think there was about 12 men killed.

JM: Oh!

GM: And the, the bus was burnt out and the driver o' the bus was killed.

JM: Yees.

GM: And there's a, a plaque on the wall up next to the British Legion.

JM: Yeah, yeah, I know.

GM: And it's a plaque.

JM: And it's [unclear] memory of that.

GM: A remem, a memorial plaque.

JM: Ah I've read that plaque I thought that was what it was for.

GM: That was in 1940 . . . '43.

JM: '43.

GM: '43.

JM: OK, OK. And what about in regard to your sort of adult life when; did you live in Longniddry then as well?

GM: Sorry?

JM: Did you live in Longniddry when you were sort of not.

GM: Well.

JM: Not, well a grown up?

GM: I was in Seton Mains when I started to work.

JM: Yes.

GM: And we lived at Seton Mains but came into the village in 1953.

JM: That's right, yes, yes keep me right.

GM: Came in 1953 that and my leisure time at that time was back intae motor engineerin'.

JM: Yeah.

GM: My pal and I bought a car that had been burned out.

JM: What kind of car?

GM: It was up for sale at a place, a, a house in Corstorphine (Edinburgh) it was advertised in the paper.

JM: Yes?

GM: And Cyril's father says "There's a car up there, there's a car you might be interested in" and he says "If you, if you get it for under a £100 I'll go halfers wi' you".

JM: Right, OK.

GM: Right. And I was only a first year apprentice or second year apprentice at that time so I wasnae getting' very much money.

JM: You werenae getting much money.

GM: Anyway two o' us went away saw this car and, and got it for £80. There was nothing left o' it the body was all burnt off just [00.46] with the chassis and the four wheels and we towed it home from Corstorphine.

JM: On what, what did you tow, what did you tow it on?

GM: Wait a minute, Cyril and his father's car.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: And he's pullin', he towed me along Princes Street and I was sitting on a box on the top o' the chassis, towed along and everybody's sayin' "Look at that wee laddie, look at that wee laddie". Anyway and, and he's, he's takin' onyway it was in the summer time you see and of course [unclear] and we came up along Princes Street down Regent Road and he turned right [unclear] I go where he was goin'.

JM: You where you had no chance.

GM: Anyway we came along the Queens Park, the Kings Park it was then.

JM: Yes, yes.

GM: And we got stopped by the boardmans "You're not supposed to come in here and towing things". We got a row for that but nothin' happened.

JM: But you continued on?

GM: Any, anyway we, we came home we took it all apart . . . and we built a new car completely.

JM: Completely oh!

GM: An open sports car.

JM: Oh fancy.

GM: No top . . . and it was a tubular chassis.

JM: Yes.

GM: Right? Same as a racing car chassis is . . . oh and, and the fibre, a fibreglass body.

JM: A fibreglass body. But that sounds like a lot of work?

GM: It was a lot of work two to three years.

JM: It's a long term project.

GM: Two or three years and . . . we never went out wi' a girl for that three years it was all the time was on that.

JM: All about the car?

GM: And you should've seen it cos there was no door on it . . . there was no doors.

JM: Yes?

GM: The chassis came along from the engine and it came down and it went back up again and over the back wheels.

JM: Yes.

GM: So, if you can imagine . . . instead o' a door it was just a, a board.

JM: It was just all one piece.

GM: And it was great for the lassies wi' miniskirts!

JM: So are you suggesting they had to climb over the top of this thing to get, hike up the leg?

GM: Aye, you had to step o'er it ken, but [00.48] eventually.

JM: What colour was this car?

GM: Red.

JM: Oh I shoulda guessed, shoulda guessed it was going to be red.

GM: And no well, but it, it, it, it was Ecuire Eccose that got me into motor sport. They're a racing car team frae Edinburgh.

JM: Yes?

GM: Ecuire Eccose. And, a ragin' man about Ecuire Eccose, anyway . . . when, when we got this, when we went to register it.

JM: Right.

GM: There was a problem, we went to Haddington because you, you got registered at Haddington.

JM: So you could register.

GM: The police came in checked it aw made sure it was awright they tested it up and doon the road, the coast road, and everything was awright and I got a certificate. "Go to Haddington and you can get it registered". Went to Haddington in the Council, County Council Buildings in Haddington laid to the girl at the counter and I says "I've to get this, can I get this red car registered?" She started to ask for all the details "What kind is it?" I says "Well it's, well, well it's a bit-so" she says "What do you mean?" I says "Well it originally was a, a 1939 Ford."

JM: Right.

GM: "Saloon, it went on fire" I says "We pulled it aw tae bits it, it's star, aw the parts, the chassis' our own chassis. She said "You can't do it that way" I say "But we just".

JM: We just have.

GM: "It's doon at hame, ken".

JM: The police have looked at it.

GM: And, and she says "Naw but come on we'll hae to talk about this" and of course it's goin' on she says "You say it was a Ford" she says, I says "Aye". She says "Well but it, it's" cos I had photographs of it from up there you see the photographs.

JM: Yes, yeah.

GM: She says "But it's, it there's no' a, it's no' a shape o' a Ford" I says "No it's now an open car wi' a hood, see?"

JM: Yes [unclear].

GM: "It's an open car" she says "But you cannae, it cannae" she says "You'll have to go somewhere else or describe it somewhere else" I says "Aaaaaawe".

JM: Aaawe what.

GM: And stood for about five minutes yackin'. I says [00.50] "Awright then it's a Ford's GM Special.

JM: Ford GM Special [unclear].

GM: [Unclear] she says "What's a GM?" I says "My initials" . . . "Oh aye, OK" and I got a registration number B.

JM: Noooo!

GM: BSS 100.

JM: (Very quietly) BSS 100.

GM: And I had it for four years.

JM: I just love how you put your initials on it and she just accepted that that was OK.

GM: That was awright, see.

JM: That was nice.

GM: But you see now-a-days, well not now but years ago it became, you got an X digit at the back o' the . . . your registration number.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: So you knew it was a hybrid if you will.

JM: Because it wasn't quite, yeah, OK.

GM: Eventually, eventually sold it and . . . as far as I know it, it, it was a student, it was a student from Ren..., because we put, we advertised it in a motorin' paper.

JM: Yes.

GM: And it was a, a, a, a university student from [round] about the Glasgow area. And he had it for about six months and he wrapped it round a telegraph pole.

JM: Aaaawe.

GM: So that's aw gone.

JM: All that work!

GM: However, in due course I, I, I was intae motor sport then and I joined the Border, Border Motor Racing Club . . . 1953. And when I went to sign in at the office the first day, at the secretary's office . . . went in and I, I, I, I was then involved as a marshal.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: At Charterhall, the old circuit at Charterhall.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Just a, just an ordinary . . . young marshal. And I went and signed in and Ian Scotts Watson (Ian Scott-Watson) was the secretary and we went intae his farm, he's now a farmer, we went into his house and he says "I've got an assistant here is it all right?" I says "Well if he's, as long as he's no' a German it's aw right wi' me".

JM: OK.

GM: Scott says "This is Jim" [00.52] . . . Jim Clark.

JM: [Unclear]

GM: That's it, that's him up there.

JM: (Very softly) That's him up there.

GM: So that was my involvement. All my, all my leisure life's been in motor sports.

JM: Yees.

GM: (Softly) Jim Clark.

JM: (Softly) Jim Clark.

GM: What a, what a great person that was. That's a lot o' useless information.

JM: No, George it's not useless it's fabulous. All of these things they've happened.

GM: And I ended up, I ended up frae 1953 what as; I could, I couldnae afford to run it, race that car so went in administration side.

JM: Yes.

GM: And frae 1950 oh '55 I think it was, I started being marshallin' and I ended up as Chief Grid Marshal for aw the circuits in Scotland.

JM: Oh wow.

GM: Well all the circuits in [unclear] there's no' many o' them.

JM: Yeah, yeah [unclear].

GM: But it, it was Charterhall to start wi' Chief Grid Marshal then it was Ingles, Ingliston and then Knockhill. What did they say somebody said to me one day it was, aye hit a stroke oh it would've been 25 years and there were some weeks, some, some months and she; a coupla years we never had, in the summertime, we never had a weekend off after I got married never had a weekend off.

JM: I see.

GM: And Mary, cos Mary got in touch she got, of course.

JM: Yeah intae.

GM: And, and we had two sons.

JM: Yees. Oh!

GM: Every weekend there was an event somewhere.

JM: Something on.

GM: In Scotland.

JM: So, oh that's a huge commitment going to all these different things.

GM: Aye.

JM: Love, love that. Right, I want to check whether you wanted to have a break . . . or whether you want to tell me a bit more. It, it's completely up to you I have no agenda.

GM: Well I dinnae ken if there's, if there's much mair I can tell yea.

JM: Oh love it.

GM: I mean [unclear] because since I retired it's my, my [00.54] health's no' been great.

JM: Yes.

GM: And well.

JM: What, what position did; so in your working life you were saying about that you, you worked your way to the top so what did, what position did you finish in?

GM: I, I finished in Quality Control.

JM: Quality control.

GM: That was for the maintenance side. I was health and safety officer.

JM: Oh! Yes?

GM: And I was . . . lee, company liaison man with the Police and the Ministry o' Transport.

JM: Right oh, oh yeah.

GM: I was.

JM: And what bus company was it still the same or was it changed?

GM: No, no it, it, it the old SMT was nationalised in 1949.

JM: Right.

GM: It became Scottish Omnibuses then it became Eastern Scottish.

JM: Right.

GM: And then it become Scottish Eastern when, when it went privatised.

JM: Right. I love how they just changed the name around.

GM: See they went roond a circle.

JM: Yes, yes.

GM: And aw it I know a great time I . . . I went right through my apprenticeship as I say five years. After two years workin' on the bench as a skilled person.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: I became the road tester.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Official road tester for the company doin' testing vehicles ootside on the road.

JM: Yes, yes.

GM: Every time a vehicle came in tae the workshop when it was finished "George'll take it".

JM: George'll take it out on the road.

GM: And there was a test route, an official test route in the city. There was no ... there wasn't nearly as much traffic.

JM: Yes.

GM: And the, the, the, the road test was New Street, Market Street, Waverly Bridge, Mound, George IV Bridge.

JM: Right.

GM: Lauriston Terrace, the West Bow.

JM: Yes.

GM: Castle Terrace.

JM: (Very softly) Castle Terrace.

GM: And back down the Mound again. That was the test route.

JM: Yeah.

GM: And I had to test 15 buses a day.

JM: Oh my goodness! [00.56]

GM: And one o' the main things, one o' the main; the core job was improving fuel consumption because that was at the time o' the Suez crises.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: And there was a, a restriction.

JM: Restriction, yes.

GM: On fuel and oils and when I started that . . . Bobby Dawson the chief engineer he's explainin' what he wanted done. He said "Now the buses, our buses run at 11 miles to the gallon; get it better improve on that". That's it, anyway . . . after about three years.

JM: Yes?

GM: Everybody was talkin' about different rates o' wages in the company, different departments.

JM: Getting different rates.

GM: And man was ever gettin' said to me and at one day I said to the assistant chief engineer Joe Goodall I says "The, the, the, I, I know, I know that I've improved the fuel consumption" "Yes?" I says "Because I get a printout every vehicle".

JM: Printout else, ah-ha.

GM: I says "A printout" I says "And it's now 15 miles to the gallon" I says "I'm gettin' nothin' extra but the company's making".

JM: Making money.

GM: There no' spendin' so much.

JM: Yes!

GM: And he says "You cannae get any more, cannae get any more". I says "Aye a' right then, a' right then". So I stopped takin' my toolbox oot wi' me. Still dae my 15 buses, but I stopped takin' my toolbox oot wi' me.

JM: Ah-ha [unclear].

GM: And guess what . . . after about three weeks it was back at, at 12 miles to the gallon. "Come in tae the office". I says "What, what've I done, what've I done?" "What's wrong with this fuel consumption?" I says "Nothin' no' as far as I'm concerned" he says "But, but, but, but it was 15 now it's down to 12" I says "I dinnae take my toolbox oot wi' me".

JM: Yeah.

GM: "Hm away you go you'll get nine pence a mile [00.58] a, nine pence an hour more". It back up again now we were the first people, first company that could run over night to London.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Night service.

JM: Yes.

GM: We're the first company that could run from Edinburgh to London on a full tank o' fuel: prior to that it was Edinburgh to London and stop at Grantham.

JM: Yeah.

GM: Get fuelled up in Grantham to take you to London.

JM: Take you down to London.

GM: And when they were comin' back they got; it left London wi' a full tank and had to go to Morpeth.

JM: Oh yeah Morpeth hm-mm.

GM: To get and we were the first company in Scotland who could go tae London on a full tank.

JM: All the way ooooh! That was your fuel consumption.

GM: And I, I, I've, I've often said to Gordon my, my oldest son I said "You know in hindsight every time, every time a foreman or a boss came in'ae the workshop and said "There's a, there's a, a, a trainin' course" I says "My hand was first up".

JM: Hm-mm.

GM: And I've told ever so many people, youngsters now, "If there's trainin' courses goin', first up wi' your hand".

JM: Volunteer.

GM: Now so I was test driver then I became a, a, I was in charge o' the, the directors cars, maintenance o' the directors cars. And then from there I was made a foreman.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Then I was assistant depot engineer.

JM: OK.

GM: And I ended up at, from, from there workin' outside as engineerin' superintendent Central Workshops at.

JM: OK.

GM: Seafield Road.

JM: Yes.

GM: And when, when they privatised the new company that bought us, well we bought it first.

JM: Yes.

GM: We got, it was an employee, management/employee buyout, but we had tae keep the company for three years, couldnae sell it. But along came Grampian Regional Transport and they offered us a sum o' [01.00] money.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: And we . . . they took us over and when that happened I says "What's goin' to happen to me?" And, and then the chief, this, the, the chief engineer at that times "I'm, I'm no' goin' to work wi' that man I'm goin', I'm goin' to pack up".

JM: Yes?

GM: And he say, he came back a wee bit about two or three weeks later and he says "I'm goin' back into head office at New Street; I want you to come wi' me". "Aye awright" I said; that's when it, quality control.

JM: Took it's time [unclear].

GM: And health and safety . . . and, and the, the workin' wi' the Police and the Ministry o' Transport was absolutely fantastic.

JM: Yes?

GM: Because if it, if there was an incident I was there.

JM: You were on site.

GM: I had to go.

JM: Yes.

GM: I'd seen a lot, a lot o' goory details, gory details to dae sometimes it wasnae a nice accident.

JM: Ah-ha no, no.

GM: But I had a, had a, the, the, a case in my office whenever I got the, a signal there's been an incident, grabbed the case and ran like hell.

JM: And off you go oooh!

GM: And some o' the, some o' the accidents I went tae, ken.

(Dog begins to bark again)

JM: Yeah.

GM: So.

JM: OK, OK.

GM: So that's about the end of it.

JM: Well oh well that's fantastic. Oh!

GM: Oh the other, other thing wi' the health and safety one I was sent on a course for health and safety when it, when that became law, health and safety law.

JM: Yes, yeah when it sort of comes in.

GM: And I got sent doon the, I was doon at, you know, I cannae mind where I was, doon in England. And I hadnae an idea what I was talk, what we were goin' to talk about health and safety and I says "What, what, what, what are we goin' to talk about eh?" I says "Oh accidents" I always remember that "if it can happen, it will happen. Get that intae your hea. If it can happen, it will happen".

JM: It will. Yes?

GM: And I says "Oh aye" and the talk then he went on to the principle health and safety and one o' the [01.02] lectures was the pyramid scheme, do you know about that?

JM: Yeah OK I know a little bit.

GM: Of course when I came back . . . the, the managing director says “How’d you get on, get on alright?” Oh he says “OK. And you’ve been on maintenance all the time, but you see health and safety is for everybody”.

JM: Yes.

GM: “Office staff, uniform staff, maintenance staff, every. So you’ve got”. I says “Aye awright” “Well get yoursell sorted oot, get yoursell sorted oot”. And, of course, eventually I’m, I’m sittin’ and I got a man intae my office wi’ me, you know I says “Bob I’ve got tae do this” and he says “Well go, go and tell us what went on?” and I’m tellin’ him a’ about it and he says “Oh aye I’ll help you wi’ the pyramid system”.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: See so we did the pyramid and the traffic manager came in one day . . . and he’s talkin’ about it and he says “You, you’re workin’ for me now”. I says “No, no I’m workin’ for the company”.

JM: Yes?

GM: “Ah but your under my supervision” I says “You are only part of it” and he says “What’s that you’ve got?” I says “It’s the pyramid” . . . he says “Get that name off”.

JM: Oh!

GM: I says “Why’s that?” I says “You’re the boss o’ the traffic department so it starts driver.

JM: Hm-mm.

GM: Right, platform staff”.

JM: Yeah that makes sense to me.

GM: “Supervision, inspectors”. I says “And if one cannae get an answer he goes to the next step, next step”.

JM: All the way up.

GM: And I says “You’re the gaffer at the top”.

JM: Yeah and take the.

GM: He went out he had, didnae speak to me for months after that. And of course the, the, the managin’ director; I, I told the managin’ director about that one “How’re you getting on?” I say “Och I’m gettin’ on fine like” I says “[REDACTED]’s causin’ me [unclear] problems”. [Unclear] “Hold Central I” and he went away [01.04] and got pyramid for, for the man, for the directors.

JM: A special one!

GM: Yea ken and that, that hung up, that hung up and in the, in, in one o’ the corridors.

JM: Just in case.

GM: And his, well the, the managin’ directors name at the top, ken. And, and awe god . . . but naw it was a rare life. It’s been a great life.

JM: Aaaah it's a good. And I was wondering it's a final question. Cos you've lived in Longniddry for a really long time I wondered about some of the changes that you've seen over the time?

GM: Oh lots o' changes.

JM: Yeah?

GM: The biggest change of course was the rabbit warren. I shouldnae call it by that, but the new houses.

JM: I love how you call it the rabbit warren [unclear].

GM: The new houses to the west side.

JM: Yes.

GM: And the old village, the old village was the Main Street.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Wemyss Terrace down there frae the station ground.

JM: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

GM: [REDACTED] . . . Amisfield Place you, you [unclear].

JM: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

GM: John Knox Road.

JM: John Knox Road that was outside the school.

GM: That's the first yane and Elcho Road was the next yane and Links Road.

JM: Right, yes.

GM: That obviously to the golf course.

JM: Yes.

GM: To the west side o' that was King's Road.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: To east side o' that is Gosford Road.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Now King's Road and Gosford were, Road were all the top-class people.

JM: Yes.

GM: All o' the money I've, it, I've no' got, I've no' got a problem, but all the.

JM: No, no. No, no you know. That's for the money.

GM: Business people.

JM: Yes.

GM: Rankin's Fruit Markets the owner o' Rankin's Fruit Market was in the, the, the last house in Gosford Road.

JM: Oh that entitled OK yeah.

GM: And Bruce Lindsay.

JM: I know that name.

GM: The, the commercial man in Edinburgh.

JM: Yes, that's why I know that name.

GM: It, it, their house was *Brulin*.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: Right, then there was Gordon now Colonel Gordon.

JM: Hm-mm she mind him.

GM: Oh I cannae mind a' the rest o' these but the big shop keepers along there.

JM: Well I mind. Yes all along at that bit.

GM: King's Road was Forsyth's.

JM: Oh right, OK, yes. There's a lot of [01.06] big company people.

GM: Oh it, it was a great place, it was a great place.

JM: Yeah. And then they build other houses over the years.

GM: Then they build aw they; I mean I get lost along there now. Folk'll come, lorry drivers come in, lost. They'll come in and say "Where can where's that about" I say "Go try the little, little rabbit warren along the road there".

JM: Then they'll be lost.

GM: Naw but I mean it's, it's.

JM: And the shops have changed as well haven't they?

GM: The shops have changed. The shops are good there excellent I've got to say.

JM: Yes.

GM: There's not a problem wi' any shop in here.

JM: Yes, but there was different shops here before. It was more about wee local businesses.

GM: Aye there was a, there, there, there was a . . . oh you know where the store is up the Co-operative is?

JM: Yes, ah-ha.

GM: On the west side o' the road just there.

JM: Yes.

GM: There was a photographer's shop, there was a butcher's shop, there was a fruiterers on that, on the high side.

JM: Ah-ha on that, on that wee bit, yes.

GM: Where the dentist is now.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: That was a grocer's shop . . . next door was the chemist, that's on the railway side.

JM: Yes!

GM: And then the garage of course.

JM: The garage, yeah.

GM: Aaaaah what else oh . . . Kitchener Crescent o' course that was the *garden city* that was the, the veteran's place.

JM: Yes.

GM: During the First, from, from the First World War.

JM: Yes. Yeah, yes yeah.

GM: And the school, the school circle; now the tree outside the school.

JM: Ah-ha I know exactly the tree you mean, yeah on the wee round-about bit.

GM: John, John Knox's . . . tree.

JM: Right, OK.

GM: And the, the story is that John Knox preyed at that tree.

JM: At that tree.

GM: In the village.

JM: I did not know that, aaaaah, I did not know that.

GM: Now . . . I don't, I cannae confirm this but the, the two bridges . . . the bottom o' the Coal Road.

JM: Ah-ha. [01.08]

GM: Is the Lorne Bridge.

JM: Right, yeah oh so you've got a bit name lots of people don't give it a name.

GM: The, the bridge at, besides the garage.

JM: Ah-ha.

GM: Is Argyle Bridge.

JM: Yes, OK.

GM: Now these names . . . where created because I think it was an early Wemyss, an early Wemyss . . . son married the daughter of the Duke a Argyll.

JM: OK, right yeah, yeah.

GM: So you got Lorne, that's the Lorne Bridge.

JM: Lorne Bridge.

GM: Argyll because it was Argyll.

JM: Yes.

GM: So there you are.

JM: I did not know that everyone just says to the Coal Bridge, the Coal Road Bridge.

GM: The Coal Road.

JM: It's got an actual name.

GM: And you see their building a 149 houses in on, on the field.

JM: That's true on the other side.

GM: And, but this bothers me, this bothers me my, my I keep on talkin' where are aw the people gonnae get vegetables; their building on farm land.

JM: Times are changin George.

GM: [REDACTED]

JM: [Unclear] everything'll be changin, everything'll be changin.

GM: Oh watch it, you'd better.

JM: That's why it's.

GM: You better cut that bit oot.

JM: Cut that bit back.

GM: Can I get you a cup o' tea?

JM: Oh I'd love a cup of tea. Right I'll stop us.

GM: Anyway I think, I think we're.

[01.09.22]