

<b>Interviewee(s): Mr Clark (MrC)</b>	<b>Interviewer(s): Unknown Female (UF)</b>
<b>Date of Interview: ?</b>	<b>Ref: EL2-6-1-3-T</b>
REGION	<i>East Lothian</i>
TOWN	<i>Musselburgh</i>

0h 00m 00s

UF: Ok, you were- you were talking about that the women were the hardest workers and when boys started out, they worked a year with the women.

MrC: Yeah.

UF: Would you like to just sort of-?

MrC: Yeah, well, I always thought that the- well, I didn't really notice it so much then but looking back on it now, the women workers had a very hard time because they were kept constantly at it.

UF: Mm.

MrC: In their jobs. The ploughmen, eh... if they were carting the turnips or muck or anything else, he got onto his carts and went out with it but the women- well, I don't say they killed themselves but they had a very constant job, aye. And, eh... I don't know how they did it, ye know, loading carts to take grain to the station. Well, the man put the sixteen or eighteen stone bag on his back and put it in the cart and the women, two women, lifted that up onto his back. Now, that was sixteen or eighteen stone.

UF: Mm.

MrC: So... they were pretty fit.

UF: Mm. To start out with, your earliest recollections of the farm and what the work you did was and, um... you know, what varied from season to season.

MrC: What I did?

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: Oh well... left school when I was fourteen, came home and... well, your first year or so was odd jobs. Eh, really... working odd jobs, often with the women.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: And the next year, I think – it could be the next year, anyway – that a shepherd was needed and I was put on to herd the sheep. And...

UF: How many sheep had you then?

MrC: Oh, I suppose it'd be about two hundred ewes, at that time. And, eh... you fed sheep in the wintertime, we cut turnips to them and, eh... I remember cutting turnips to two hundred sheep when I was, oh, pretty young.

0h 02m 06s

And it- the field was a mile away and they'd be out there for daylight, and ye just sorta stayed there all day. Och, it... I suppose, eh... well, ye didn't get away very much but ye always seemed to manage to get the wee odds and ends o things in the parish, at night. There was a discussion club and a

singing class and lots o wee things like that went on in the parish, ye know. Ye always got to them at night. Ye didn't get far afield, that was the only thing.

UF: And there was a lot of seasonal labourers would come? I mean...

MrC: Oh yes, we had... yer full staff. All your cottages were occupied with full staff and, in season, ye had mebbe two or three Irishmen into a bothy, to help out. Seasonal jobs. Aye. And, well... I suppose that went on until 1918- until 1914. And then of course, it was goodbye for four years, anyway. I wasn't home for four years. And it was a long gap, ye know. Ye missed an awful lot, at that time, going away when ye were between eighteen and nineteen and not coming back till... about four and a half years later. Ye'd missed an awful lot o the farm. Aye.

UF: And was it the same kind of farming, ye know, with sheep and...

**0h 04m 00s**

MrC: Oh yes, it's been a mixed farm all the time, eh... sheep, cattle and half grain.

UF: And that'd be the days of the horse and ploughman?

MrC: Oh yes, it was all horses. Tractors... started sometime between '20 and '30. I can remember buying ma first tractor. It would be about 1928, I think. I bought it from Fordson, from Johnny Hunter. It cost seventy-two pound and with a great, long discussion over the last two pound. It took a long time [*laughter*].

UF: [*laughter*] Oh dear.

MrC: Aye.

UF: [*mumbling*] So, we'll go back to the days before your first tractor. I mean, how many horses would you keep on the farm?

MrC: I would have kept between seven and eight on here. Aye. And then, of course, in the '20s, I went to old Eastfield – it's the home farm. The laird gave me the home farm then and I went over there and just managed this place for my mother and my family. See, my father died the week I came home.

UF: Mm.

MrC: And, eh... ye were sorta left... sorta lost... but, eh, I think- in fact, recently I've been thinking how good the old farmers were to me, coming back up, I'd been away for four years. And, eh... how good they were, in a sorta unobtrusive way.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: They were just... ye just found out- well, after I joined, these beggars have been watching me [?], keeping an eye on ye [*laughter*]. Just... ye got a helpful hint here and there.

**0h 06m 06s**

I remember one... in Edinburgh market one day, I was pretty young, trying to buy two or three cattle from Alan [?] and having a bit o an argument and an old dealer called John Middlemas came walking across the market, 'what's atween ye, laddie? What's atween ye?'. And I said oh... told him what the position was, 'get them bocht, laddie. Get them bocht'. Well, he knew that it was worthwhile, that they were worth the money, probably, and ye got that bit o advice from him. Now, he'd been keeping his eye out from the other side o... on what was going on, ye know. And there's another

thing... which I've remembered all the time, one o the first farm sales I ever went to, it was down near North Berwick, an old farmer came up to me and said 'what are ye doin here the day, laddie? What are ye doin here the day?'. 'Oh', I said 'Mr Mitchell, I could do wi a binder, if I could get one'. He says 'now, laddie, it's not what ye can do wi, it's what ye can do withoot that counts'.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: And I've remembered that all ma days.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: It's not what ye can do wi, it's what ye can do withoot.

UF: Yeah, I think that's a lesson for the young folk today.

MrC: Well, it is, ye know.

UF: Yeah.

MrC: If you just know how things have gone... in latter years, the amount of machinery that's been bought which has been, in many cases, superfluous. But, eh... times were different and, eh... the younger generation, they wanted something, they told me I'll get it and then they found the damn thing was useless and there ye are. Oh, in those days, ye'd to think twice before ye bought anything.

UF: Mmhm. What sort of work did your horses do? I mean, it was ploughing...?

**0h 08m 00s**

MrC: Oh, just- oh, they did everything, ye see. They- through the seasons, they started off with ploughing and then the sewing and each one had a sorta different job. The foreman, he sewed the corn, and the other men hammered it up and cultivated and... then, what was then? Then carting the turnips in the wintertime and carting out muck over... eh, work was synchronised to keep your staff going all through the year. It changed... quite a bit... wi the coming of combines. I think, eh... the amount of work that they did away with...

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: Was tremendous. Ye see... where ye drew yer corn, ye cut it with a binder, ye stooked it, ye carted it into the stackyard and stacked it, then ye... mebbe carted yer stacks into an old loft and put them in there and waited for a wet day and then ye threshed them on a wet day, inside. And then yer corn came out and ye carted yer corn to the station... oh, I don't- it took a tremendous amount o labour, that.

UF: Mm.

MrC: Of course, labour... labour was cheap, ye see. But there was a tremendous amount of labour. And then, the first combine, of course, it came just across the way there, when Lord Balfour got the first combine up. We thought he was daft but never mind [*laughter*]...

UF: What year would that have been?

MrC: Now, I couldn't tell you.

UF: Just roughly?

MrC: I couldn't tell you what year it was. I can remember it coming in and watching it and thinking 'oh, that'll never do' [*laughter*]. It's just like everything else – it took its turn.

UF: And that meant bigger fields? I mean, have they had to-?

MrC: Oh no.

UF: No.

MrC: Field sizes have... not altered round about here.

**0h 10m 00s**

Ye see, sometimes, there's a lot o talk about pulling out hedges and that sorta thing. It may happen in some o the big arable places but... in the mixed farms, here ye've the stock and whatnot, there's not- there's... I think I've seen about one hedge pulled out, that I can see, in all the area around here. I only know of one hedge that was pulled out.

UF: Mm.

MrC: Aw, these conservationists are... keep that thing on, cause these conservationists talk a lot o damn nonsense.

UF: *[laughter]*

MrC: I believe it was the conservationists that were the reason for us stopping the quarrying at Traprain Law there.

UF: Mm.

MrC: And well... I wouldn't like to say what the loss and the messes that they're making, where they've gone to, but I [?] Traprain Law there and the good lord put it there for us to use it... as far as the quarry being a mess, well, it's a mess already to look at, from the other side and another hundred yards wouldnae have made much difference and as far as I'm concerned, they could take the whole damn thing down and it wouldnae matter. This...

UF: You think they're too concerned about how things look and not about [?] and everything?

MrC: Yeah, yeah. Well, they're... they're not practical. I mean, this farm steading is old tiles and you're not to shift these old tiles, although they cost ye the earth, every year, to keep 'em there. Whereas, if ye put on an asbestos roof, for a bit that comes off, it would take no upkeep at all.

UF: Mm.

MrC: But, eh... oh, they say, oh no. And there's an old engine chimney standing up there... it'll fall down some o these days and God bless it when it does come doon but...

**0h 12m 00s**

UF: *[laughter]*

MrC: No, I think... some o these- ye see these old doocots too, in the places, a lot o them are just a nuisance but, eh... if they want to preserve them... well, preserve one if ye want it. Or photograph them and keep a record of it but they say you mustn't take an old doocot down and this sorta thing. It's just a piece o nonsense.

UF: Were all these doocots around just kind of food supply and...?

MrC: I believe they were. Eh... at one time, I suppose to... being able to eat pigeons in the wintertime, they could go and get pigeons so that... I don't know whether that'd be... I think mebbe

the old monks or something, these kind of auld beggars that had to be well fed, they mebbe did that. But I think a lot o the pigeon houses put on farm steadings were just a sorta... I don't know how ye'd put it, just a sorta fashion.

UF: Mm.

MrC: In the steading, they built a doocot over the entrance- and you'll see it in a lot o steadings around here, the entrance door had a doocot up above and then, these folk tell ye 'oh, you mustn't widen that entrance' because of that old doocot and ye cannae get a combine in. Ah nah.

UF: What about the changes on the estate? Um...

MrC: I think that's one o the...

UF: Since your time as-?

MrC: That's one o the sad things, in ma time: the break-up of the big estates in this county. When I go back and think of Earl o Wemyss, Yester, Whittingehame – A.J. Balfour – Beal, the Earl o Haddington, and the factors who looked after the estate for them and the... well... their ambition on these old farms was to do the best for the lairds, keep everything right for the laird.

**0h 14m 08s**

Things got into the hands of estate agents, unfortunately, in the town that don't know the first thing about it. Oh, they're good at opening letters and seeing what the highest offer is but as for practical work, they know nothing. But the old factors... oh, I mean, ye tipped yer bonnet tae them when ye saw them. Just sorta second to the laird, in the area. And ye know, the estates, they kept the parishes, like this parish, they kept it together. They kept the gardeners, the gamekeepers, the foresters... it kept a lot of employment, round the estates. I think it's... a pity to see the break-up o the big estates.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: And, eh... in a way, they did quite a lot o pioneer work, in agriculture.

UF: Mm.

MrC: Well, if ye go back, there was Fletcher of Saltoun, who was a famous man wi a threshing mill, the Marquess of Tweeddale was one o the pioneers in steam ploughing.

UF: Mm.

MrC: In the later years, Lord Balfour was the first man to bring a combine up here.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: Ye see, they... they did a lot. And I just read- I think it's today's *Scotsman*... eh... well, yes, it was one o the wee notes in it, that the Duke of Wellington gave all his tenants their rent back because of hard times. Eh, and-

UF: [*laughter*]

MrC: Aye. He gave them a hundred percent rebate on their rents. And there was- just a few weeks ago, there was another thing about a hundred years ago, someone else gave a fifteen percent rebate and I can remember, in the bad years in East Lothian, certain lairds gave a ten percent rebate.

**0h 16m 16s**

UF: Mm.

MrC: That'd be in about the thirties, early thirties, when things were pretty tough. And I know that certain lairds voluntarily gave their tenants a rebate on their...

UF: Big changes in Lothian region.

MrC: You *[laughter]*...

UF: *[laughter]*

MrC: No, ye see, the lairds, on their estate, with their people, they kept a certain amount of sport. It all- almost all these estates had a bowling green or a curling pond-

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: -which was kept up by the estate, just for the winter enjoyment of the- the summer and winter enjoyment of the people round about.

UF: Mm. And do you think with the break-up of the estates it's the sort of break-up of community life as well, or...? Or a change in community life?

MrC: To a large extent, yes. The people- of course, mind you, the farms are not employing nearly as many either.

UF: Mm.

MrC: But, eh... well, down that school down there, which is closed now... Lady Betty Balfour, there's a big crowd o Balfours up in the house up there, but Lady Betty was very musical and she started a choir.

UF: Mm.

MrC: And she had a choir down there of something like forty voices.

UF: Mm.

MrC: And it was taken all around the county, to sing at the wee concerts, and that was... the origin of the hall that was built in Whittingehame, over there.

**0h 18m 04s**

Eh... the school wasn't big enough, just a wee country school for this big choir and Ms Balfour, who was the power in the land, behind A.J. Balfour, she had this hall built, with a very big platform-

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: -for Lady Betty's choir. Aye. And that, eh... the First War would break it up.

UF: Mm.

MrC: That was before the First War.

UF: What about the effects of the Second World War? I mean-

MrC: Mm?

UF: What about the Second World War? Did it have just as startling effects? I mean, did you notice a difference between immediately before the war and after?

MrC: Yes, there was a lot of... it brought... brought a lot of people together too, ye know. And... the Home Guard, in all this area around the hillfoots, and ye'd get the men coming down – our headquarters were up in the hall, up there – they would come down there on the certain nights when we did our... training and they'd be down there, oh, an hour before the time and stay about for an hour afterwards. It made a sorta community, ye know, just- it brought them together quite a bit. Eh... aw, I don't know.

UF: What about y'know, I mean, the farms now, when you say that there's not nearly so many people working on them?

MrC: Oh no.

UF: And is it really all just going back to families farming?

MrC: Yeah, very much so. Yes.

**0h 20m 00s**

When I remember first, there were eight cottages on here and it wasn't enough. I had to try and hire some people double. Ye know, two to one house, sorta two women to one house or a man with a daughter or something like that. To have enough to do it. It's families doing it now, aye.

UF: And they're still doing as much work, it's just the machinery makes a difference?

MrC: Well, you're doing it mechanically, ye see.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: Yer, eh... loading- well, they're just now- they're loading muck and emptying cattle courts. Well, they're doing that with a tractor, a lift. Whereas, that was one o the jobs ye usually took on Irishmen for and the women workers. 'Come on, let's muck out all the corners', ye know, and now it's mechanical, a tractor and lifter. There's... there's nothing...

UF: What about looking after animals? I mean, has it changed much or...?

MrC: That is the... job that's becoming difficult. There was a... an auctioneer stopped now just the other day, and he's [?] of course, we had a wee bit o conversation. He's in touch with a big lot of farm workers and he just said how difficult it was becoming to get someone who's going to work seven days a week, looking after animals. Eh... ye see, ye can understand it the view of sort of farm... well, he says there's so many men working the arable side and mebbe a couple o men working on the stock. Well, the arable men, they're still on Friday night and they're coming in Monday morning; but the men on the sheep and the cattle, they've got to go on all weekend. I suppose that's the reason why dairy farms are having trouble too now, unless they're big enough to work on shifts. Of course, we've practically no dairy in this county.

**0h 22m 15s**

UF: Mm.

MrC: Or very little, anyway.

UF: Mm. Do you think we might see a day where there's not a cow in the fields or...?

MrC: Mm? Well, ye see, at one time all our farms... I'd be one o the last, I'd kept the two cows.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: And an old man who fed the cattle, he milked the cows and then... very often ye got one o your ploughman with a wife who could milk.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: And for a small wage, she milked the cows, night and morning, just the two cows. And then, when that became more difficult and the auld cattleman had died, I got a machine, ye see, just for the two cows, and I could just put the machine on and do the job. But, oh, it... it just became impossible.

UF: What about the hens round the farmyard door? You don't see any of them.

MrC: Aye, there's some walking about here.

UF: Oh, is there?

Both: *[laughter]*

MrC: Oh no... no, the barndoor fowl's not there now.

UF: Mm.

MrC: There used to always be hens running about, scarpering, and making a mess round all the place and I chased them for their bloomin lives, for the mess they were making...

Both: *[laughter]*

MrC: But... ye see, that was a farmer's wife's perquisite, in a way.

UF: Mmhm.

MrC: She didnae get much other ways. I know... ma wife used to rear turkeys, always. Mebbe thirty, forty turkeys up for Christmastime, ye see. That was a way o getting a wee bit o money now and again.