

**MANX HERITAGE FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee: Mr Mike Goldie

Date of birth: 1934

Place of birth: Laurel Bank

Interviewer: David Callister

Recorded by: David Callister

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Topic(s): Early school days
Greeba Castle
Mr and Mrs Hall Caine
Working as a gardener
K & L Garden Supplies
Gardening Society in South of Island
Laa Columb Killey Show
Rushen Floral Art Club
Photography
RAF [Royal Air Force]
Dances at Greeba dance hall
Manx *Keeils* and *Tholtans*
Manx Radio programmes
The ‘Big Spud’ Competition
Secret gardens around the Island

Mike Goldie - Mr G
David Callister - DC

DC It's Mike Goldie today and I suppose we must start back with, well the Goldie family, you see, it goes back a few generations on the Isle of Man, does it?

Mr G Well, my mother was a Quayle so that goes back an awful long time, and the Goldies, well, I've been saying for years we must try and trace the Goldie name, seemingly we came from Scotland, so my father might have been – a grandfather or great-great-grandfather or whatever might have been a fisherman, or something that come over and stayed.

DC It's not connected with the Goldie-Taubman family than?

Mr G I think there's some very loose connection there. I've got a cousin who really thinks that we are connected with them, you know, a bit of prestige, she thinks, there, you know. Sorry about that, Eric.

DC Where were you born yourself then?

Mr G I was born at Laurel Bank, a little white cottage just before you came to the top bend at Laurel Bank, and that was way back in 1934, so now you know how old I am.

DC Right. So you'd be, one of the first things you'd hear would be the TT then, would it?

Mr G Oh, yes, yes, it's rather funny when you think back, you know, was it because you were told, or whether you actually did remember. I can sort of remember being pushed in a pram up Ebenezer Lane, which is just up the road and we used to go along the Staarvey Road, up the top there, because the noise of the *DKWs* and those motor bikes, two strokes, in pre-war days, were horrendous and I must have been just a kid in a pram or something and my father and mother used to take me up there to get away from the bikes.

DC So they didn't frighten you, in other words.

Mr G Yes, because the bikes were going right past the door then, yes. And I vaguely remember all the hedges full of blue butterflies and all sorts of things up on the Staarvey Road which, I think, you can still find up there.

DC Then you'll have gone to school in the area somewhere, won't you?

Mr G We're back to blue again. I was on the little blue bus, Lewis Crellin I think was, he was either the driver or the bus conductor, Lewis Crellin from Peel, you'll remember. And I remember getting on the bus, first day going to school, at St. Johns School, and that was a long time, before the war anyhow. And I remember St Johns School, the headmaster at one time there was George Sayle, and one thing sticks in my memory, I've got a bit of a Manx twang, a Manx accent you know, and I always used to say, 'Oh, there's trushes about now,' you know, and he really laid into me, when I was only a little feller, you know, 'you don't say trush, it's THRUSH!' so they were knocking Manx out of us way back in those days, even.

DC Yes, they would be, yes. Who would be the people you'd go to school with, do you remember any of your school mates at that time?

Mr G I'm still very good friends with quite a few of them, yes, the Reverend Juan Thompson, who doesn't live on the Island now but I remember him, Dennis Quirk and John Kennaugh, they were all younger than me of course, yes.

DC Good days, school days, were they?

Mr G Oh, they were, I think so, I think everybody would say that, you know, yes, yes. We made our own entertainment I think, more so a bit later on I think we made our own entertainment, once we went off to the Douglas High School, you know, and a bit older then, and then we got our push bikes and we set ...

DC So you would go to Douglas on the train then, would you, in those days?

Mr G I did once or twice, we were at, after we left Laurel Bank we went to Greeba Castle to live and Greeba Castle was sort of half-way between St. Johns railway station and Crosby.

DC So it was the bus again, was it?

Mr G So I had to get the bus, there were occasions I was on the train, but we had to get the bus and I used to have to walk from the Quarterbridge up to Douglas High School, up at St. Ninian's.

DC So Greeba Castle is a prestigious address then, what was it that brought your family there?

Mr G Well, my father was a gardener and they were hard times, I think, for people in those days, working people, I know my father was on the dole I think when I was born, they had a tough time. Not like nowadays, of course. And he used to cycle from Laurel Bank all the way into Douglas, up Belmont Hill, to a garden there, and it was a godsend when he seen this one advertised for Greeba Castle, that it was a cottage going with the job. So I used to live in Greeba Castle cottage, which sounded very posh.

DC What do you remember of those times spent there then?

Mr G They were really happy days, I think, up in the castle like, it was like a big park, you had, all of your own, you know, as a kid, from what age, from about six, seven, eight, right up through to when I got married, you know, it was a smashing place, a lovely, lovely place.

DC Who would be living in the castle in those days?

Mr G Well, it was empty most of the war time – not empty, there was nobody living in it in the war time, my mother was the caretaker of the castle, and occasionally, I think when the war was over, Ralph Hall Caine, which was Hall Caine's son, and wife, they'd come from London and stay in the castle for the summer and then disappear again until the following summer.

DC So those would be, what, a kind of privilege yourself, to live in that sort of circumstance, in that area really, as well.

Mr G Oh, yes, it was nice. I must admit I liked living at the castle there, you know. It was rather amusing there this Mrs Hall Caine, she lived in London, in a flat somewhere, Berkeley Square I think it was, and if she bought anything in a shop in Bond Street or somewhere, in London, she would ask for it to be charged to her castle in the Isle of Man, so it was rather amusing, the bill would come to us and then we'd send it back to them in London. It never worked for me that, at all.

DC Well, a gardener even in Greeba Castle, wouldn't earn a lot in those days

either?

Mr G Oh, not really, no, I think we were – well, my father must have been quite content that he had a free house, you know, in those days, you see, when there was very little work about in those times, you know. And it was certainly a hard place to work, there was no working from 8 till 5 in those days. As far as my father was concerned he was out scratching round every night of the week out, you know. It used to annoy him actually, people would come up and see him and they would look round and say, ‘You’re lucky here, there’s no weeds grow in this garden.’ Well, he was out scratching 9 o’clock at night every day, like, hoeing round the garden, hoeing where there was nothing, you know, but he was killing off all the weed seeds so and that’s how I started gardening, really, David, was at Greeba Castle, as a kid, the old man, my father was sort of anxious to get somebody to get some work done for next to nothing. But I think I stuck out for sixpence an hour, that’s 2½p now, but sixpence an hour was quite good, you know.

DC Oh, it was a good rate then.

Mr G Yes, of course, very good, yes, so I think that’s stood me in good stead, it learnt me to appreciate the value of money. And then when I left school in 1949 I, well, my father wanted me to be a joiner or something, you know, and, no, I was anxious for big money, so there was somebody across the road from the castle that wanted somebody a couple of days a week or something, and before I knew it I was there, sort of, full time, gardening, you know. That was a lovely place, *Northrup* it was, *Northrup* was the name of the place. And after that I went down to work for George Moore, The Raggatt, that’s David Moore’s father, and from there I went to Port St. Mary and then my last gardening – oh, no, after Port St. Mary I went to K & L Garden Supplies, I wasn’t a gardener there, I was a salesman, machinery and greenhouses and I think I seen places I never knew existed on the Island, you know, especially with all the new residents that’s coming now, they were buying places all over the Island and they were very happy days, and then I ended midways gardening up at Geraldine’s, I think I was up there for about fifteen years.

DC This was with the Jamiesons, of course.

Mr G And that’s where I retired – yes, Geraldine Jamieson, yes. So I finished my

working days up there.

DC And K & L Garden Supplies would have been one of the first, I suppose, what later became big businesses all round really, with the garden centres.

Mr G Well, I think they were really, yes, because there was quite a boom on at that time which would be the early '70s, I would have thought, you know, and there was – I was out quite a lot selling lawn mowers, this was in the days before all these super stores and things came along, and we also had a policy of going out to demonstrate a machine, not to just buy it in a box off a shelf, you know. If somebody rang up wanting their lawn mower, we took it out and demonstrated it, you know. Nine times out of ten you sold it that way, you know, but they were lovely days, I enjoyed them.

DC This was before ride-on mowers came in, I suppose.

Mr G Oh, no, we used to do ride-on mowers as well.

DC Oh, you had them as well.

Mr G Oh, yes, I sold three in one day, I was really chuffed with that.

DC On commission, were you?

Mr G Two of them were second-hand ones, I think, you know, but I was quite chuffed with that, yes. Yes, that was the very early days, ride-on's were looked on as sort of a luxury then, but nowadays they're two a penny, aren't they, really, most places that have got big lawns, etc.

DC There would be more gardeners in your day than there is today, I mean, there were, I mean you were professional gardeners weren't you, really?

Mr G Yes, I suppose there was more private service gardeners, because that's basically what I'd been all my life, was working for somebody. Nowadays I think lots of people get a landscape contractor or something in to do their lawn.

DC It's freelance today isn't it, really, yes.

Mr G And there again with all the television programmes people are so interested in doing their own thing, in doing their Charlie Dimmock, or Titchmarsh impressions in their gardens, you know.

DC That's right, yes. What were the most interesting things about gardening to you that you liked best, trees was it, or shrubs, or was it just getting the spade into the ground.

Mr G Well, there's a great sense of job satisfaction in gardening, lots of people hate gardening, don't, they, you know, I suppose you do?

DC No, I like it, I like it.

Mr G You do, good. But I've always enjoyed gardening to a certain degree, there's certain jobs I didn't like but it was a sense of job satisfaction, even if it was digging, at the end of the day you would look at that and say, 'By God, that's nice,' you know. You'd forget about the hard work, you'd say, well, that was worthwhile doing, you know. And that applies, even cutting grass, cut a lawn, if it's done nicely, you know, lots of people hate cutting lawns, but I think what they hate is because they've got the wrong lawn mower.

DC It's when you're told that you've got to get all the daisies out, all the weeds out of the lawns that the problem comes, isn't it?

Mr G There's no problem nowadays.

DC Oh, isn't there?

Mr G No, no, selective weed killers, just shoot round your lawn with the liquid, and that's it, you know. Whereas in the old days you'd have to have what's known as a daisy grubber, a little thing like a trowel that you used to fork up the weeds out of the lawn, you know. I don't know what else we used to do in those days, maybe we weren't so finicky as we are nowadays.

DC Then you went on from that to organise a garden society in the south here, you also you've been involved in photographs and various other things and so on, I mean how did all these societies come about?

Mr G Well, as far as I'm concerned we, after I got married in '59, we, what did we do then, oh, we moved down, after a few years at Patrick living, we moved to Port St. Mary and there was a lackage, to my mind, of garden clubs, in fact there was nothing, the only show in the south was Laa Columb Killey and there was no other societies and I'd mentioned this round to one or two of the keen growers round about, you know, and never thought – well thinking it would be a good idea to form a club – never gave it another thought, until a few months later some very well-heeled gentleman came up and he said, 'What happened to that garden club you were going to form?' you know. So I thought to myself, well, if he's interested, I'll go ahead and do it. So I think it was '64, or '68, something like that, I forget now, but it's about 35 years ago, I put a few notices out, a small crowd turned up and that's how the Southern Gardeners was formed and they were happy days, hard days for me, as sort of secretary and show secretary and all that, you know, but by golly they were good. We had Violet Carson over one year to open – or three years, in fact, she came over to open the show and literally hundreds and hundreds of people turned up to see her. But shows have changed so much from those days now, it's really pathetic, quite honestly, the attendance, the exhibits are still good, but the attendance at shows is very disheartening. I'd hate to be connected with any society now.

DC Is there still enough interest in people becoming members of the societies?

Mr G To a certain degree, yes. I've noticed over the years, people, new residents, they will come, they're trying to find their niche in society, they think they'll join the garden club for two or three years, or the wine circle or the floral art club, you know, and when they find it, obviously you stay there, and I think that's the way it is with the Southern Gardeners, you know, we've got, there's quite a few members who've been there for quite a few years now, they've found their niche in the Isle of Man.

DC It's interesting that, I mean gardening now, on television, you can almost find a gardening programme any minute of the day, can't you, and you'd think much – there'd be far more interest in local shows, but you're saying it's diminishing, then.

Mr G Oh, it is, it rapidly is – rapidly, it has been, it's on the up now, I think as far as exhibitors are concerned, there is, I can see a change, and they are getting better now, but not like it used to be in the first year or two, you know.

DC Right. You've mentioned wine and you've mentioned floral art and so on, you had those going as well.

Mr G Yet again I was asked to help form a floral art club, you know, how about forming a wine circle, not that I was any way interested in floral art or wine, I can assure you, but I went ahead and done it and I'm not sure about the wine circle, whether that's going, but the floral art club, Rushen Floral Art Club is still going.

DC And the other one, of course, is photography, that's been a lifetime interest, has it, really?

Mr G That's basically been my life saver in the last few months, I must say, it's a great little society we've got, we're on the up as far as members are concerned, there's more members joining and if anybody likes a good night out, as it were, you know, sitting looking at good slides on the screen or photographs, taking part in the competitions and with some good humorous banter, and a drink or two, it's – the Southern Photographic Society is the one to join, no standing on ceremony with our lot, just a bit of fun it is, and that's the way, I think that's the way the garden club was in the early days, there was always a bit of fun and all, it doesn't seem to be quite so much fun nowadays.

DC Yes, it's got more serious. Did you have a box *Brownie* when you were a lad then?

Mr G I've still got my mother's box *Brownie* upstairs there, it hasn't been used for a good many years but I've got something more sophisticated now than a box *Brownie*.

DC Of course, yes, where would you go to get your best photographs today, I mean do you like to get into the countryside more than anything else, do you , I suppose?

Mr G I like all sorts, I specially, I'm looking forward to the TT coming, because TT week you get a lot of all back street heroes, I think they call them, or hell's angel fellows, you know, they look really rough characters but they're not really, you know, they're all very, very nice fellows, you know, but they frighten the living daylights out of you, especially if you've got a long lens like

I've got and you try and get some candid pictures of them, you know, I like that sort of – I like all sorts of photography really. And you should always have the camera with you, because you don't know the minute you're going to get a good picture.

DC Where did you hit on things, that you thought, ah, I've got the camera, if I hadn't got it I wouldn't have got this, I mean have you had some specially important shots that you think ...

Mr G It's rather funny you should say that, Tom Glassey was on the phone the other day and, you know Tom ...

DC Certainly, yes.

Mr G Well, I think we all know Tom and he's got a CD coming out and he said, 'I could do with a photo, Mike,' he said, 'to put on the CD, have you got any?' And I said, 'Yes,' I do have a lot of photos. I said, 'Well what particularly would you like?' He said, 'Well, have you got a heron on the Silverburn?' On the Silverburn river.

DC That's the bird we're talking about.

Mr G Yes, the bird, not the herring, the heron, or *coar ny hasten* as the Manx people would call them. And I stopped to think for a minute and I said, 'Why do you particularly want that?' you know. So he said, 'Well there's a song in the CD that refers to the Silverburn river and the birds and things.' And I said, 'Well it just so happens that I have a heron on the river,' you know – I cast my mind back about 25 years and I remembered I'd got a picture of the heron, so there we are, that's brought us right up to date, you might say, with photography.

DC So that will take you – that will be on the cover of the CD, presumably.

Mr G Yes, aye, he rang up yesterday to say that he'd had a quite a few photographs submitted and they've accepted mine, you know, to – you know, I'm quite chuffed about that really, quite chuffed.

DC The photographic society then, as you say, has been a success, and today, it's quite different, I suppose, technically it's completely different from when you

started with photography and presumably now people are using their computers more, are they, for this?

Mr G They are really, we're getting really into high-tech, as far as photography, having started off with box *Brownies*, you know, my journey through photography was box *Brownies*, and then with a more up to date camera, one of the first SLRs I suppose, that's the single lens reflex, which I think I used to use when I was in the forces which was way back in the '52, '55 years, I remember taking pictures out there, prints, mainly, they were in those days. And then getting more up to date, I got more up to date cameras, I still haven't gone digital as far as cameras are concerned. You may see that I've got a computer now, I don't know much about computers but I've learned an awful lot about transferring, digitising slides and photographs, you know, and it's a marvellous hobby, you can sit at the computer there doing things to photographs, you know, and before you know it two or three hours is gone just like that. It is the future, there's no doubt about it.

DC So the camera, the standard cameras of today, and the 35mm camera and all them, they're going to be out in the future, do you think?

Mr G I'm afraid that's the way it's going to be, not with me, I would think that ...

DC A few generations.

Mr G Well, now, even now, I would think, I would say if you went out in a crowd of people now the majority would have digital cameras now.

DC Really?

Mr G Yes, because the size and the convenience, because digital camera, you can go out, take your photographs, you can just plug it into your computer and you can see the picture there and then, on the screen, and if you want a print of it you can do it straight away, no problem, or even plug it into the television, and you can see it on the telly. But it's not as adventurous, I don't think, as going out with the ordinary cameras, no.

DC So have you gone out at all hours of the day to get certain lights and backgrounds and things?

Mr G No, it just happens with me, I'm afraid. Lots of real serious photographers would do that, you read in the photo magazines, you know, about people, they were out in the morning and the light wasn't quite right so they go back later in the day and they're a bit late and they time it to the second almost, you know. I'm keen on photography but not that keen. Photography is a bit of fun, I think, as far as I'm concerned and the rest of our members, of the Southern, are really. It's good fun and especially during the summer months you may say, well what do we do in the summer months. Well, I organise outings and we go out with a crowd of us, you know, because there's lots of people living in Castletown, they hardly know where Laxey is, you see, so they're only too delighted to follow the leader, as it were, you know, they follow me round and we've had two very successful outings so far this year, one, believe it or not, was just to Ballabeg, which is just over the road. We done a couple of gardens there, and then we done a super garden at Glen Roy last Sunday, and that was – the trouble is getting these people away with their cameras and their tripods from the site we go to, you know. 'Oh, we don't want to go yet, Mike,' and all that, you know and that really, is really impressive as far as I'm concerned, you know, it really is. Well, my serious photography days did actually start in the forces, I was in Aden for a couple of years and we had a lot of spare time on our hands and I think we used to go out in the midday sun, which Englishmen weren't supposed to go out in the midday sun, but we did there, I don't know how the hell we survived, because it was so hot, you know, up in the 100s throughout the whole year, nearly, you know, and I done a lot of photography there, you know, down in the old Arab quarters and things like that, it was really good.

DC Was this in the RAF, was it?

Mr G Yes, I was in the forces for three years, yes, a glorified National Serviceman, I signed on for the extra year to get an extra three bob a week, I think it was, which was a lot of money in the early days.

DC I did the same.

Mr G You did the same.

DC A lot of people did, in fact, yes.

Mr G Yes, it was attractive, wasn't it, that little bit extra money, you know.

DC That's right, yes. Did they ask you to stay on?

Mr G They did, yes, the week before you were due to come out, you know, 'Would you stay on? We can guarantee you ...' what was it then, SAC or Corporal or something, you know, if you stayed on, but I didn't stay on, but I was really glad I did join the forces because we're talking early '50s, I'd never been off the Island, I'd never even been on a boat, and it was quite an experience, you know, and I think it hasn't done me any harm, especially the square bashing, the square bashing we all had to do, you know, you were told to do what you were – do it – and you did it, you didn't sort of hum and hah, you know and I think if they brought that back nowadays it would sort a lot of these young fellers out.

DC I would agree with that, it's the discipline, which then makes you self-disciplined, I think, later in life as well. Now, so when you came out of the RAF then what was it, straight back into gardening, were you?

Mr G I was ill for a year, and then, that's right, yes, that's when I started gardening at George Moore's and I think that's just about the time I bought myself a motor bike and the Island was my oyster then, sort of thing, it opened up a whole new vista, you know.

DC Before that you'd have a push bike, I suppose.

Mr G I had a push bike, yes, we just used to, in the early days, kids, we used to go out just like the kids do nowadays on what they call these cycle tracks they go round now, but we did it on main roads, you know, which were a lot safer in those days.

DC Yes, not many cars about.

Mr G You couldn't do it now.

DC And then you were motor biking about the place then.

Mr G Yes, we'd drive all over the Island.

DC That gave you a bit of freedom.

Mr G Yes, courting days, we went to the old tin hut at Greeba, I bet not many people know about the dances that were held there, just before you come to Greeba Bridge, coming from Douglas, there's a little green and red tin shack there, that was the dance hall at Greeba.

DC The gable end faces the road, doesn't it?

Mr G Yes, the door, the gable door faces the road, yes, and it's still there. And we used to go to Abbeylands as well, I think the Abbeylands one has gone now, but those were great days, you know, dancing to Victor Silvester, would you believe, rock and roll hadn't been invented hardly, I don't think, in those days.

DC Some gramophone records, not the person.

Mr G Oh, aye, God, aye.

DC Victor Sylvester.

Mr G And then we got married and I think it was round about that time we had, well, I've got four children altogether, but in the earlier days we had three kids and we used to have to get out on Sundays, you know, they'd drive you mad on wet Sundays or any sort of Sunday, so we used to take them out and I had a passion for going round, looking at old *Keeils*, and anything with a Manx significance, you know, and they'd be all looking, oh, God, here we go again, walking across this field to find old *Keeils* and things. And then we graduated to *Tholtans*, all the old ruins round the Island.

DC Yes, so you started keeping records of those then, at that time, did you, notes?

Mr G Not, no I didn't keep many of those but I was lucky in so much with the *Tholtans*, which, as you know, I don't know whether the listeners know, but they're old ruins round the Island, the Island's dotted with them, there must be 400 or more old ruins up in the hills and all over the place and I was very lucky, in those days, *The Manx Star*, as the leading paper was in those days, I used to write an article there and I could put a picture of the *Tholtan* in and ask for people to ring me with any old yarns, I wasn't interested in the old architectural history or in any dry as dust stuff, just good old yarns.

DC Who lived there, what sort of characters?

Mr G And who they were and all that.

DC So you must have got pretty good responses, did you?

Mr G Oh, I did, oh, it was marvellous. Peter Kelly does a similar thing now, much better than I did, I must say, in *The Independent*, nowadays.

DC Well, he's got a full page, hasn't he?

Mr G Yes, yes, but they were good days for getting a response from people, you know, it was marvellous, and then you'd go out and people were saying to you, 'Oh, I could have told you a lot about that place,' you know. I said, 'Why didn't you ring me?' you know, this is about two or three month afterwards, you know, it was really good. And I think this had all stemmed, when I was just left the primary school, my father and mother had bicycles, and you wouldn't believe it, the three of us used to go out cycling, and this particular day we cycled from Greeba, Greeba Castle down to Jurby, because my father wanted to find the old site, the old house that he was born in and this was right down in Jurby and we eventually found it, it had just been vacated and I was only a little feller and they pushed me in through a window there, it was derelict of course, you know, the old person had gone, and I remember going round the house and there was what they called stock fish, hanging up in the back room, fish that had been salted and fried, I think it was, I always remember that. And I think that must have stuck in my mind, you know, when I got older I had this desire for to go and find all these old ruins and find out the history of them.

DC And you photographed them, of course and you published your book, or Manx Experience published the book, was it, as well.

Mr G Yes, it's still a few copies about, I haven't seen many, you know, but it was really good that, I enjoyed that. And then I used to go out with you.

DC Oh, well we did two or three series, didn't we, 'Goldie's Oldies,' and 'Go with Goldie,' that's right.

Mr G I really enjoyed those days, you know, and looking back, I think K & L days,

working at K & L and then going out with you and the Manx Radio, not just *Tholtans* but the gardening programmes I done as well, they were really good old days them.

DC Well, just to sort of go back to the gardening, I mean one of the things that's been important I suppose for gardeners down here, is to be competitive, to grow the best they can for the shows and so on, I mean you've had a bit of fun with those things, haven't you, with big spuds and marrows and things like that?

Mr G I'm glad you mentioned the big spud, yes. Lots of people I just meet now say, 'How's your big spud then, Mike?' you know. Lots of them would just read about them in the paper, and it sounds so comical, doesn't it, really, the 'Big Spud' competition. And lots of people are of the impression that you've got to grow the biggest individual spud, you know, and when they hear of somebody growing 90 pound, they won't believe that that's one spud, but it's not one spud, it's the crop, the actual weight. Everybody's given a spud at the beginning of the year, they plant it, they do whatever they like with it, you know, and then we go round and dig it, you know, and that again is one of the highlights of my year. Sad, isn't it! And we go round and we, because nobody knows what's going to be under this spud, you know, till they dig it up.

DC It's whatever's grown off that one main tuber then, isn't it?

Mr G That's all it is, the heaviest weights, and it can vary from ounces up to, as I say, the record we got was Walter Dawson in Port St. Mary, 90 pounds, would you believe it?

DC Wow, that's amazing.

Mr G I've grown 52, I think that was my heaviest, you know, and I had to be content with second, I was 52 and he had 90, you know.

DC How many spuds would he have to get in 90 pound then, it must have been 30 or ...

Mr G Well, it can vary an awful lot, because some people the way they grow them they get quite big tubers, others you don't need so many tubers, you know, some people have an awful lot. I would say he has a fair number of tubers.

DC So what's the secret then of growing a big crop?

Mr G Well, we've no idea – we tried to find out Walter's secret, you know, 90 pound.

DC It's the dung, isn't it?

Mr G Yes, oh, it's got to be looked after. The majority of people will just get this seed potato and they'll just go and stick it in the garden and forget about it. Well you're not going to grow more than 7 pound, maybe, that way. But if you look after it, either the blossom, or the holm [sp ???], as you call it, the top of it, I had it about – it was taller than myself last year.

DC Really?

Mr G That's the blossom on it, you know, because it had been, I didn't let it flop down, I trained it up, sort of thing, like you would a sweet pea, almost, sad again, isn't it?

DC So they need regular watering?

Mr G Oh, they've got to be because a spud is maybe 99% water, isn't it, actually, the potato, so they need plenty of water and plenty of feeding. And as I say if you look after it you'll get a good crop, but it's damn good fun because nobody has any idea when they come to dig it, you know, as I say, it could be just ounces, some people are very proud to get the lowest weight, believe it or no, you know. They might travel from here all the way down to Bride, you know, and you'll go there and dig it and there's only about 3 ounces, you know. But it's all good for a laugh, because as I say, there's nobody knows what's going to be under there, it's – it could be, as I say, ounces up to 90 pound.

DC Do you restrict people to one single variety, that they all have to use, or can you use any?

Mr G No, no, everybody has the same variety.

DC Which would be mainly what?

Mr G Well, we've had *Tara* this last three or four years because it does produce a big

crop, it's good for your garden, too, you know, if you want to grow a good crop in your garden, it's very good, *Tara*, that is.

DC And do you use artificial fertilisers for them?

Mr G Yes, oh aye.

DC Anything, you can use anything.

Mr G Anything, people can do whatever they like. I've got a cunning plan this year that I'm not divulging because it may not come to fruition. No, no, it's good fun, as I say, going round on everybody this way. And we went – this was formed with the garden club many years ago, we had this spud competition and then as has happened with lots of the things in the garden club in later years it sort of went into the doldrums, then the photographic society took it over and there was only a handful there than were interested, and Jimma Cain, of the Cronk-y-Voddy lot, Jimma and Dennis and Donald Cannan and them all, they were ... they thought this is a good idea, so they were the life saver of this big spud competition, because they've entered into it wholeheartedly, all these Cronky fellows, you know, and it's been really good fun, thanks to them.

DC Something else, and I've an idea it started in Onchan with Peter Kelly, but I'm not sure, was the secret gardens and then Peel took it over, Castletown have had a go at it, various other places round the Island, that's proved to be a huge attraction to the general public, hasn't it, really?

Mr G It has.

DC Secret Gardens.

Mr G Yes, and they've done a good thing by not having it every year, we're having the Castletown one again this year, after two years absence, you know, and there's one or two new ones in the Castletown one I've been told, as well, you know. But it was a memorable day two years ago, the sun shone the whole weekend, the Saturday and the Sunday and there was a continual queue of people going through everybody's garden, just like a big snake, you know, going round through Castletown, and they were all, sort of, back gardens. Take me own, for instance, it's only larch lap panels round about, nobody knows

what's behind those panels, but this was free access for everybody, there was all these hidden gardens, and not just in Castletown but Peel, and I think they had one down at Maughold and I hear there's one in Colby this year as well, so, I must admit I'm looking forward to those and I hope people in the Isle of Man are looking forward to it as well.

DC There's another thing about gardening as well and today often on these television programmes you'll see more like concreting and almost civil engineering in gardening today, than actually digging and planting, won't you.

Mr G Yes, decking's the word that comes to mind, doesn't it, yes, everybody talks about decking and ...

DC But in the '60s, I think it would be late '60s, there was a big craze with people to concrete everything over and get rid of gardens, wasn't there?

Mr G Yes, oh, aye, it all goes in phases doesn't it, really, yes. But now people are copying the television quite a lot, they're trying to do water features and they're using this decking instead of concrete, I suppose, you can have a decking sort of patio outside instead of slabs. What else do they do – oh, there's gravel and stuff. I must admit I've succumbed to that, I've got a ...

DC What, you've given in to gravel?

Mr G ... I've given into gravel and weed suppressant, I'm fed up weeding.

END OF INTERVIEW