

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

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee(s): Mr Stanley James Maddrell Karran

Date of birth: 26th July 1910

Place of birth: *Hillcrest, Cregneash*

Interviewer(s): David Callister

Recorded by: David Callister

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Topic(s): Childhood memories of WWI
Cars with gas bags
Farming
Spanish Head
Cregneash
Lintel quarrying
Fishing
Sunday School
Tourists
Harry Kelly
Manx Gaelic
Brig *Lily*
Tower at Thousla Rock

Stanley Karran - Mr K

David Callister - DC

DC I've got Stanley Karran, S. J. M. Karran, Stanley James Maddrell Karran, born 26th July 1910, we're in Cregneash, we're on [at] *Hillcrest*, and of course you couldn't get higher much than this crest of the hill here, and the view's tremendous.

Mr K Yes, it is. Well I was born in this house, well it was almost ninety years ago now, isn't it, and lived in it until the outbreak of the Second World War and then I went to the war, came home and I got married and after my wife died I came back up here to live with a widowed sister, who is younger than me, and unfortunately she died and now I'm left on me own, and unfortunately got no family, so here I am, up in the wilds up here, all on me own.

DC Tell me about the place as a place to live, I mean it's a wonderful summer's day today, we are looking out at the sunshine, and so on, but in the winter time it must be a bit rough here.

Mr K It can be rough in the winter time, it's the wind is the worst feature up here, now, the wind is, and the rain naturally comes, but you get accustomed to it and you know how to live with it, that's the chief thing. And it was tough goin' up here, life in general was very hard up here in my young days.

DC What are your earliest memories then?

Mr K Well, my earliest memories was actually before the First World War and the memories I've got of the start of the First World War, was seeing the horse drawn drays coming up here with sections of huts on them and they're goin' out to the big mountain out there, well, a lot of stupid people call it Spanish Head, but there's no such place as Spanish Head, and there were two army huts put out there to guard what was already there and what was already there was a coastguard station, I think it was erected by Lloyds and that was great interest to us in our young days, I had cousins, older than me, of course, and they learnt the semaphore and they could read, you see, that was very interesting, and the original coastguards here. Now the hut that was there was bought by a Mr Kelly and erected up near what is now the lighthouse beacon station. Now that's falling to parts, but my uncle bought the semaphore and my brother, being a bit of engineering minded, when it was no use to me uncle, he said, 'I'll have that!' and it was fetched up here because it was a solid cast iron base, swivelling, and he had a great notion of building a windmill on it, but it never came off and the

thing lay out there for years and there was a young chap taking a very great interest in it, he's got thousands of photographs and lots of history of the place. 'Oh,' he said, 'I must take a photograph of it,' just lying out there amongst the bushes, it's being lying there for over sixty years, and he saw a little brass plaque on it, tablet, plate, so, 'I'll have that off,' he said, and he came up and took it off, took it away with him, and there it is on the wall.

DC I spotted that on the wall, and it's a circular brass tablet which says: Stevens & Son of Glasgow and London, and a date, 1892.

Mr K 1892, yes, that was erected there. Yes, 1892, of course it was.

DC And it's now set into a nice wooden surround.

Mr K That'll be, the hut is rusting away, and that'll be the last remnant of that coastguard station out there.

DC And people will wonder in future what on earth it was, probably.

Mr K Yes, yes, yes, they will do.

DC But you see that recollection you are telling me about, before the First World War – I mean you were born in 1910, you were only four years old then, weren't you?

Mr K Yes, it was a great thing.

DC That wouldn't affect life down here, that First World War, would it?

Mr K No, what affected it a bit was we had to black out, no lights at night, and of course my father was sailing and that was, my mother was very worried about that, you see, that was in the First World War, and at that time, too, if my mother wanted to go to meet relatives or friends out in Surby or up out at The Level, she'd always have me for company, before I was six years of age, you know.

DC How did you get to the places?

Mr K Walked it, there was no transport up here then and people used to say, about having the shopping, the shopping came to the door, there was a baker's cart up here practically every day of the week and the grocer's about three times a week and the grocer always came in with his book, 'What do you want today?' and took his list and went and got it out of the cart, and that was the shopping, except for the butchers, they had to go down for meat.

DC Did they go to Port St. Mary for that?

Mr K Go down to Port St. Mary chiefly for that, so now that's all disappeared now, with the motor cars made the difference, you see, and that's what's happened.

DC Do you remember the first motor car appearing up here?

Mr K I remember them pretty early – I remember them with the gas bags on top.

DC Gas bags?

Mr K Yes, they ran them off the town gas, bag, yes, one or two chaps, gentleman came to retire to Port St. Mary and they had the old cars there and the brake lever and all that outside the door.

DC Outside, that's right.

Mr K Yes, I remember all that.

DC When did you first get a ride in a vehicle then?

Mr K Oh, I can't remember now.

DC No, you'd be a kid though.

Mr K Oh, yes, yes. I remember going to Castletown in the float with me uncle, he'd always be delivering p'raps a bag or two of potatoes down to his sister, down there, and that. But you see the most of the people up here, the men, were sailors, it was, there was like three farms in Cregneash.

DC One was the Karran farm, wasn't it?

Mr K Yes.

DC Is that your family?

Mr K Well there was two Karran farms.

DC Oh, two Karran farms?

Mr K Yes, an uncle on each side, and then there was Taubman's farm, it had been originally, one half of that was Keggin's, and then when there was a Keggin married a Taubman, the people were getting old then, and they joined up and it was let as one farm. And what you heard about then, you used to hear about the old people, and you remember the old people now who were gone past work and you'd hear about what they were doing and all that. Now I can point a field out to you up towards what we call The Chasm Hill, up there, going towards The Chasms, a big long field. Well, d'you know how a lot of this land was broken in?

DC No.

Mr K Well they didn't have big heavy horses in those days, they couldn't plough, they used to start at one end of the field and dig a trench up and clean that bit and dig another trench and fill it in, and there was those two old men who owned that field up there went right from one end of the field to the other.

DC So they were just hand digging then?

Mr K Hand digging, yes, that's how the land ...

DC And they were growing crops in it, were they?

Mr K Oh, good land after that, yes. I never remember that, you hear about that.

DC Yes, of course, yes, yes.

Mr K And oh, if you start over the other side there, there was the Gale family. Now I should think, before I was four years of age, me mother used to take me over there, there was a Mr Corlett in the house, and he was married to one of the

Gales, and that was the last of the Gales that lived up here. And yet up over towards The Chasms there's a place called Slieu Gyle [sp ???] – that was Gale's mountain.

DC Oh, right, yes.

Mr K Now that name has still stuck, but the Gales have all gone. They went, mostly sailors, master mariners and all that.

DC And you say, there was no Spanish Head, you say?

Mr K No, that's, I'm bringing that to the fore, now there's a gentleman, now he's an MHK now, he's written a book, and I explained it to him and I think it's got it in his book, that Spanish Head is a misnomer, there's no such place, on the Isle of Man. Now there's, George Broderick, I think it was, was telling me that there's at least three Spanish Heads out in Ireland, which are genuine Spanish Heads.

DC Why did it get the name Spanish Head down here?

Mr K Well, if you get a Manx dictionary and look up the word *speeney* – S P E E N E Y – that means peeling, anything that's peeling. Well, the lintel quarry out there was an important place in its day, all the cottages had their big lintel over the chiollagh, and the window lintels, for instance turnip sheds, they had the big lintels cross, and they were important. There's a roof down, or one or two roofs down at Castle Rushen, made from the lintels from up upon the big mountain here, at Cregneash.

DC And the lintel farmers lived here, did they?

Mr K But the lintels, my grandfather was the last to do it commercially.

DC Was he?

Mr K Yes, and it stopped one day, suddenly, yes. My father took me out and showed me the quarry. Now the point is you're getting at, how it become Spanish Head, *speeney*, if you look it up, that means peeling, and these lintels used to peel off, you see, that's how they got them, you couldn't blast them, you'd fracture the

lintel. And they came fairly easy, but if you look at the next word, you'll see S P E A N E Y, *speaney*, that means anything appertaining to Spain. Now when the clever lad came over to write a – whatever you want to call it, on the place names round the coast here, quite a while ago now, before my time, he'd ask one of the old chaps, that was taking him round, 'Well, what do you call this place here?' I mean this is after you'd passed Black Head and *Slea ny bery* [sp ???], next place you'd come to was this lintel quarry, oh, the old Manxman would say, 'Oh, this is *Kione Speeney*' – y'see the way he would talk you couldn't distinguish whether the Manxman was saying *speeney* or *speaney*, they didn't emphasise the words so much in those days.

DC So it was misinterpreted.

Mr K 'Oh,' he said, 'that solves it! This is where the Spanish Armada was wrecked,' see, and they put that, they put that on the maps, and it's all wrong, there wasn't a Spanish ship came down this channel, of the Armada, they all went round the west coast of Ireland, down the Western Islands.

DC And people will say today that there are people living in the south of the Island who have the sort of Spanish look about them.

Mr K Oh Spanish, yes, they say that's how they're all so dark, they weren't all dark, they were mostly mousy, and some of them were fair haired round here, you see, so that's Spanish Head for you.

DC You just said a minute ago, then, that the slate quarrying stopped all of a sudden.

Mr K Yes, well my father took me out to show me, one day, where it was, right on the edge of the cliff, you're on the cliff here, take a step forward and you're down a couple of hundred feet, and he showed me a section there that was cleaned out, all the earth would be chucked over the side, ready to start work the next morning. The next morning when he went out, well the first thing he noticed his tools was gone, and there must have been a slide of, perhaps, it could have been hundreds of tons of rock gone. He might have been working on that the day before – finish! – he never went out again.

DC He gave it up?

Mr K He give it up, yes, so that was the end of the lintel quarrying out on the big mountain.

DC It must have been a very dangerous job anyway?

Mr K Absolutely, it was, because they'd be peeling them off and then they'd have to go down on ropes and haul them up.

DC Haul them up with a rope?

Mr K Yes, I've heard all sorts of people saying they knew all about it and they'd be lowering them down to the sea and taking them away. Well I won't argue about that, let them try it. You go out there on a small boat to see if you would like to take them down on those rocks, no landing place, strong currents, and see if you'd like to land them on a boat. Now my father told me how they did it. They came, it'd be a lot towed by horses in those days, you know, the big lintels, they took them across the big mountain, down in towards Bay Stacka, at the place called Kistruan, [sp ???], and he showed me exactly a little slope coming down, where they'd lowered these lintels down into sheltered water, and they could put them on to boats or rafts, whatever, and take them away.

DC Were the slates then cut well enough before they needed any more tooling, or did they just go straight out to a building, would they?

Mr K I would imagine they would have them all dressed ready, to the sizes they'd want. And if you go round some of the old *chiollaghs*, there's one down there, Margaret Bredgen's [sp ???] house, sadly no roof on it, but the old *chiollagh* is there, complete, with the lintel on, and you'll see a little hole in one end, well of course that's where they used to put the hook on for to drag them away.

DC Oh, is that what it's for?

Mr K Aye, and that was that. But the most of them would be taken direct from there by land, it all depends if they were taking them a long distance, likes of to Castle Rushen, they could off load them there right alongside the Castle, so it'd be easier taking them by sea. Of course the old chaps, they worked the tides, you know, like we had to. In our young days I spent all my happy young days from The Sound round to there, with me brother, and brother-in-law, and me

uncles before that, in a twelve-footer and we had more fun out of that than some of these big fellows with their big yachts, we had, yes.

DC Really?

Mr K Oh, fishing, yes.

DC What was it good for catching down there?

Mr K Well mostly the callig, pollag, [pollack] but latterly I had a boat in Port St. Mary, used to have the bolks [sp ???] and out with the feathers, we would be getting mostly cod, yes. So that was that, and we used to keep the boat out there, believe it or not, occasionally, me uncle was keen on that. But it was all rocks, no pebbly beach, no, but that's the way it went. Mind you, some people round here, in the middle of the last century, they didn't believe those stories, they said the Spanish Armada came all right, and they had it all off, but that's another story.

DC Stanley, let's talk about war years then, here, maybe down at Cregneash, now you said it didn't affect much really in the First World War, apart from that experience you had, what about, I mean, it almost passed it by, the war years.

Mr K No, all, so many men here are sailors, and some in the army, you know, and that. Now in those days, the early days, you'd get the farmer, there'd be the one farmer, comes harvest time it was all the women of the place that would be going out to tie the sheaves of corn. And one interesting feature we used to have occasionally, if there was anything big came on, was the postman arriving, on his trip out to this coastguard's station, and in those days, if there was any news about the war, it came through to the post office and he would have it, and I've seen them out in the fields there, there must have been something good one day and there was a cheer went up, you know.

DC Oh, right, yes.

Mr K That was that, because you see I remember the last days, I say, when the women did a lot of the work on the farm, now one of the last small crofts down here, was, my sister had it, on the way down to The Sound. She did the farming, with the help of my uncle who had horses, she had no horses, and her husband was a

shoemaker and he went off to work every day and that's the way, that's about, that's the way they used to work and that's about the last of them round here.

DC So they had to have two or three jobs to survive, really?

Mr K To survive, yes, you see there was so many fishermen. Now the fishing was dying out then, even in my young days, but a lot of the lads from round here went to sea, either that or got good education and went away to work and stayed away, and that's why the place became deserted. Now you get a man, he goes away, he gets a good education, born in this – cousin of mine – born in this village, and he got a good education and he became a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, now if he got married, a nice wife, and he says well, a lovely place I came from, little cottages, now if he had to take that woman to show her one of these little cottages up here, that would be the end of it, and that's partly why the place became deserted.

DC So you remember it virtually deserted, do you?

Mr K Well, yes, yes, there wasn't a very high standard of living here.

DC But it retained a blacksmith, did it?

Mr K No, the blacksmith was disappearing in my time. The blacksmith was down, the smithy, in the old days, was down near the Karran farmstead, but everything belonging to that has disappeared now.

DC Ah, right. So how much has the place changed then, since you were a young fellow?

Mr K Oh, a lot, from those days, you see, you'd get the one farmer in each farm, and chiefly women, but then when it came to mill day, all the farmers ganged up together and they would come and go through the district helping one another.

DC Yes, of course, but you avoided all that, you weren't a farmer, were you?

Mr K No, I wasn't a farmer.

DC Did you ever work on the mill day, or not?

Mr K Oh yes, many a time, yes, on the mill day, worked on the mill day. I worked a lot for me father, me uncle and I worked a lot for me sister down there, you know, when I was young, and the difference was, in those days, when I was a young man, Saturday, I've seen me many a day down in my uncle's turnip shed, and we'd be cutting up the turnips, and putting them in the chip baskets and stacking them up, ready for Sunday, that he wouldn't have that much work to do, and Sunday came along here, all was quiet, it was a day of rest in those days.

DC And was the church always used?

Mr K Oh, yes, the church has been used continuously from 1878, yes, and it was used, you see they were crafty, the church people, when they wanted a church, there must have been talk about a school, and they approached the Education Authority, and between them they built the school and the church. Now the church, it was only the sanctuary at the east end that was consecrated, and the rest was school through the week and then the services on Sunday, and I remember a service on a Thursday night in the winter time there.

DC Oh, aye. So you'd go to Sunday School here, would you?

Mr K Oh, yes, yes. We were ecumenical up here, we'd go to the church in the afternoon, service here, and down to the Methodist, down The Howe at night, yes, and went to both Sunday Schools, believe it or not ...

DC Really?

Mr K ... and the schoolmaster couldn't understand how we wanted two days off for the church picnics, yes.

DC Was there any difference between the teaching in the two?

Mr K No, no, there was nothing in that way, no.

DC Then, when did tourists start coming down here then?

Mr K Well now, the tourists here, of course you tend to remember that because it was generally in nice weather, and the best part of the year, now the tourists up in

Cregneash in my young days was this. You'd look out, perhaps in mid-morning, perhaps again mid-afternoon and that road going up towards The Chasms would look like a flower festival with all the different colours of dresses, the road would be full of people, walking. They'd walk up from Port St. Mary, have a cup of tea at The Chasms and then come down to here, some of them would go down to The Sound and the rest would go round back to Port St. Mary or Port Erin and that was their holiday, and they enjoyed it and it did them good.

DC Yes. And Harry Kelly was around till somewhere in the 1930s, now Harry Kelly's cottage is one of the big attractions down here now – you'll remember Harry Kelly himself, will you?

Mr K Oh, I remember Harry, yes, oh, I've been in the house many a time, seeing Harry, he was a great old character, Harry, and of course typical old Manxman, Harry was. But the funny thing about it was there were so many people round here of my mother's generation that had lived in a different age, and you would never, you'd hear very little Manx spoken. Now on occasion, not often, my mother had a friend coming up from The Howe, and getting dark, she'd say to me, 'Come on with us,' she says, 'I want [you] for company back,' and she'd walk down with her to The Howe and she'd have the company of me for coming back. The whole time those two ladies got together it was all Manx ...

DC Really?

Mr K ... not a word of English, Manx, yes, it was a Mrs Crebbin, a dear old lady, and it was all Manx the whole way down, and yet she'd never talk to us in Manx, no, it was disappearing then and I think the war did a lot to pretty well finish it all off.

DC Of course Harry was a Manx speaker, wasn't he?

Mr K Harry was a fluent Manx speaker, the real Manx. There were one or two Manx speakers, apart from up in Cregneash – oh, they could all speak Manx, yes, and you'd hear odd words, and that's all.

DC So Harry was, I mean you were only a young fellow at the time obviously, and he was getting on, he was pretty old, but was he an easy to get on with fellow then?

Mr K Yes, fairly easy, Harry, yes, especially if – I never remember him at his easy days – he was fond of a tot, you know.

DC Oh, was he?

Mr K Oh, yes, yes, but of course naturally they couldn't afford much, could they?

DC No, and of course the things that were everyday use in his cottage, they are antiques today, aren't they?

Mr K Antiques today, yes.

DC And of course you could almost say that in your own lifetime, that the things that you were brought up with have become antiques, haven't they?

Mr K Antiques, yes, yes, and as you go through life, you know, you get a few disappointments in life. Now I've got that little brass plaque there, but when I inherited a place down Port St. Mary, a workshop, there was an old muzzle loaded gun, it was in very bad shape, hanging up there, and just lay there, nobody taking any notice to it, so anyway when I was emptying out I took it up here, and just kept it out in the shed. And my father had an old, he had a double-barrelled shot gun, which was getting very dilapidated and by now rusty, because it went out, we weren't wanting it at all, and then there was an amnesty came, anybody who had guns want to dispose of, they had no licence for them, there was an amnesty, you can hand them in to the police station, and that was it. Well there was a gentleman I knew, he was doing odd little jobs for me, and his hobby was collecting guns, I think he had hundreds of them, and he was up this day doing a little job for me, and talking about the guns, and I said, 'Oh, here's my chance to get shut of these two guns,' you see, and I give him both guns. Now, I was talking, I can say who it was, Mr Henry Kennaugh, we were down at his house one day, it was Christmas time, and down the cellar, he was showing me round, and on, mounted on a board up on the wall, was a gun with a brand new ramrod underneath it, you know, and it was all cleaned up and mounted there, and I drew his attention to it. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'that's one of the guns off the Brig *Lily*, see. 'It's not,' I said. 'Is it.' 'Good Lord,' I said, 'I'd one exactly the same, and I give it away.' Had I known, and the fellow who took it off me knew ...

DC Ah, yes.

Mr K ... he knew, oh, yes, he told me after, oh, he says, 'I know where there's another out Ballabeg.' Now there was two, and I was telling the late Mr Norman Callister, namesake of yours, who was in *The Sound* farm, he is retired by now, I was telling him about this. 'Oh, yes,' he says, 'over there,' he said, at his cousins, when this came out, he said to one of his family, the young feller, 'for God's sake,' he said 'will you take that gun,' he says, 'down to The Sound and heave it out into the tide,' he says, 'before we get into trouble,' and here they were, guns off the Brig *Lily*.

DC Brig *Lily*, yes.

Mr K Very sad, I mean, I could have mounted it the same, and saw the police, it would have been unusable and keep them, yes.

DC That's right.

Mr K That's one sad thing that's happened to me and there was another thing, my father-in-law built the tower that's on the Thousla Rock down there, in The Sound, and you know the cross that's down at The Sound now, mounted, well he made it.

DC Oh, did he?

Mr K Yes, and next door to us there was about four or five youngsters used to come for a holiday and my wife, being kind hearted, she let them go all round the house and they came to this chest, and they opened it, a big scroll of paper in it, it was the plan, and you'd be surprised what an elaborate thing it was, of that tower that's built in The Sound ...

DC Yes, oh!

Mr K ... and he looked at it, he knew what it was, 'Oh, Aunt Edith,' he says, 'can I have it?' and she hadn't the heart to say no – gone! – and it was signed by Stevenson.

DC Really?

- Mr K** Yes, it's things like that, it's upsetting a bit, isn't it?
- DC** You've got a picture on your wall here, of two fishermen, in a small boat, with a creel, I think, underneath them, and a net in one of their hands ...
- Mr K** That's right, a tramble [sp ???] by the looks of it.
- DC** ... maybe, but there's a Brig *Lily* connection, isn't there?
- Mr K** Yes, that man ...
- DC** What's the story then?
- Mr K** ... on the right, the old man, is the son of the only survivor of the Brig *Lily*, Kelly.
- DC** His name's Kelly, is it?
- Mr K** Kelly, that's all history, that's down, but there's nobody, now that picture is becoming popular, now, because it's in the Museum, but I've got the original, yes. Captain Douglas has got it in his book, but he didn't know anything about it. There should be a caption under that, the picture means nothing unless you know, in fact the people tell me I should have it printed under that now.
- DC** Yes, it's a picture dating from, when will that be?
- Mr K** 1902.
- DC** 1902.
- Mr K** Yes, and Brig *Lily* was 1852, yes, so that's history, local history.
- DC** A bit of history hanging on the wall, yes.
- Mr K** Yes, it is, very nice, I don't want to part with that picture now, there's relatives of theirs had the loan of it, photographed it, and it's out in England.
- DC** The Chasms are just over the hill here, of course, not far away, I don't think so

many people go down there today as they used to, they were very popular, weren't they?

Mr K Oh, it was very popular at one time.

DC Aye, there was a café there, wasn't there?

Mr K Yes, there was a café there, a sort of a tea room, and it was very popular, hundreds of people come round there every day, and that was a holiday to walk round these coasts, and the people enjoyed it, and we were always able to get a copper or two, you know, stand on our head for the crowds coming past, you know, in those days, but it was to see the visitors.

DC But you played down The Chasms, when you were a youngster, did you?

Mr K Oh, yes, played all round the place.

DC Quite a playground that was?

Mr K Quite a playground, yes, and what I tell people about The Chasms is this, now to go back, if you read John Rimmington's book – Alexander Maddrell has written a very good article for him in that book, describing it from a geological point of view, how they were formed. But I tell people about The Chasms, if you go down into the – through the gate and go to the right, turn right along the path, you'll come to a little hollow, depression, a lovely little spot to have a picnic, and you'll see a little stone circle there. Well the people who made that stone circle never saw The Chasms.

DC Really, because they weren't there?

Mr K No, that goes back to what, Neolithic times, or something, and The Chasms is merely 2,000 years of age.

DC As young as that, are they?

Mr K Oh, yes, when the cliff moved ... is explained on that – I've heard there are similar places up in Norway, sitting on a big round boss of limestone and the earth moves that little bit and opens out.

DC Your parents must have been a bit nervous of you playing around there, were they?

Mr K Oh, they didn't like us going near the cliffs, no. We were getting into trouble enough in that little boat out in The Sound if we were caught out in bad weather, you know, to battle against the tide and the wind, by jove, yes.

DC A big drop on those cliffs isn't there, down there?

Mr K Oh, yes, and dangerous, you know, one slip, yes.

DC Any people have accidents down there?

Mr K Yes, I always remember there was some College lads having a walk round, one of them, I know the spot, just above the – there's a rock out there to the east of the Sugar Loaf, just a little tiny bay, and there's a narrow path there to go along and he slipped there and down he goes – finish! – and there was another girl out at The Chasms itself, on the outside, she went down the cliff, that was the end of her, yes.

DC Good place to go to study sea birds, isn't it?

Mr K Oh, marvellous, out there, for the sea birds. Now out at The Chasms there's a plaque out there with a namesake of yours, Callister, and he was out every Sunday, he was a wonderful lad, studying all the birds. Sadly he was killed out in Spain.

DC In Spain, yes, that's right.

Mr K Yes, yes, Stuart Callister.

DC Stuart, and a great fellow he was, and an absolute enthusiast for this area down here, wasn't he?

Mr K Absolutely, yes, he was, very sad that.

DC Where did you play apart from The Chasms, then, when you were, as a kid, a teenager or younger even?

Mr K Well round about here, winter time, there'd be paper chases and all that, you know, two gangs, you'd go out with torn up paper and leave your trail to see if they could catch you, things of that sort, and there was the football, that was a great game here, I've seen cricket in a very, very small way and ...

DC There's no football field here though, is there?

Mr K No, no, in any of the fields you could get into. And in my young days, from opposite this house here, this quarry, across the road here, was always here in my time, but I remember the Highway Board quarry starting.

DC Yes, is that what's the car park now, is it?

Mr K That's the car park now and it's very sad that it ever happened because from here over to the first fields you come to, that side of the road, there was a lovely bank of heather there, and up from the first house, at that time there was a pathway going up from every house along here, through the heather, see, that's the important thing.

DC Because yours is the third house along from that path, isn't it?

Mr K Ours is the third house, yes, but there was a pathway going up from every house, and some of the people, an aunt of mine kept a goat up there, see.

DC Well that was a Highway Board quarry because I assumed that that quarry, the stone from that quarry had built some of these cottages down here, but they'd be from an earlier quarry then, would they?

Mr K Not a stone, no. Now there's a gentleman made a tape and he says that all the stone for the houses in Cregneash was quarried out of here, there wasn't a stone used out of it in Cregneash, it was all Highway Board ...

DC It's a modern quarry this one, up here?

Mr K Yes and up out there, there was the sliding rock, a nice drop of about twenty feet, dead smooth, and there's many the back been worn out of a pair of trousers there, and it was a nice place to play, it's all gone. Now if you go along there now, right from the fields over there, right behind the village here, you'll find

nothing but gorse. My mother used to take, on wash day, used to take the clothes up, across the road, and up onto the heather and spread them out to dry, and now it's all gorse. Now it's the quarry that's the cause of all that gorse because they used to go over to a place where this gorse grew, they had permission, they used to cut that, out into big bundles, put it on top of the blasts with a chain over it and with the result that the seeds carried, spread all over the place, spoilt the whole place. And down in front of here, in front of this house, was all heather. Now in the days, in my young days again, as I'm calling it, there was no, we had no front garden, it was open and my mother, practically every day, if she'd had a bowl of soup or something, she'd be going down across there and I can still see it, going down through the heather bushes, a little winding path, down to the little cottage that's down there, no roof on it now, to this old lady. Now that was ... some of that would be going back before the war, the First World War.

DC Meals on wheels without the wheels?

Mr K Without the wheels, yes, yes, they had no rubber tyres in those days. And it was years and years after I discovered how she was paying so much attention to that old lady, and it was years after I discovered that her husband had been lost in Port Erin bay in a sailing yacht taking visitors out, and a puff of wind, down – up – over she comes – and they were lost, him and another man.

DC I mean it was a pretty hard life down here, but just take simple things, like things we take for granted today, water and electricity, now where did you get your water from down here?

Mr K The chief water supply was down in the well across the road from Harry Kelly's cottage; over the stile, there was a track going in about thirty feet, a hedge each side of it, and there was the well.

DC So you had to draw water out of the well, into buckets or containers ...

Mr K The well was always full ...

DC Oh was it?

Mr K ...you'd just dip your bucket in and if it were very dry when you got down

you'd fetch a jug with you and ladle it out.

DC Did you have to boil the water before you used it, then?

Mr K Oh, yes, we did, but we didn't always do that. Now that was the main source, but there's another, there was another old character here before my time, you see that's what I used to hear in my young days, about the people who were gone, old Ned-Beg-Hom-Ruy ...

DC I've heard of him, yes.

Mr K ... a little feller, son of Tom the Red, now he had three fields, and in the middle field there was a well, now I had an aunt who lived across and her husband was an analyst and every year he took a sample of that water and analysed it, and he said, 'You could drink it as it was, you couldn't get better water.'

DC Really?

Mr K Yes, and all those, they're all neglected now. We did get the well saved because, between the Highway Board draining and Henry Kennaugh, I think, pulled the hedges out, they just got him stopped in time, and it's reinstated again.

DC In this house, then, where you were born, they'd have oil lamps, I suppose, would you?

Mr K Oil lamps in my young days, yes.

DC So electricity would have come here when?

Mr K About 1935, yes. And the water mains up here were laid by the Germans in the wartime.

DC Oh, were they?

Mr K Yes, out on their work projects, they laid the water mains up, and it was quite a while before there was any water in them.

- DC** So that was the second war we're talking about?
- Mr K** Oh, the Second World War, oh, yes, indeed.
- DC** And then just up over the top we've got what people call the Mull Hill, what do you call it?
- Mr K** *Meayll* [pronounced Mule].
- DC** *Meayll* Hill.
- Mr K** *Meayll* Hill, nothing to do with the animal, mule, no, *Meayll* – it's transposed from another Manx word, it is, yes. And there was, in the wartime, the last war, of course, there was the very, very important radar station up there, one of the first of its type in the country.
- DC** And in this house your mother has entertained Eamon De Valera, you tell me?
- Mr K** Oh yes, and Professor Marstrander, yes.
- DC** Because the people here, the area here, became significant I suppose after the war, didn't it, really – between the wars?
- Mr K** Between the wars, yes, but all the old way – I say I was just born in time to see the old people who had lived the old way, but it was disappearing, and when they died out it was gone, because all the young men were gone, as I say, a lot of, practically, I could say, all my cousins, once they were able to get education, as I say, Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry, chemists, analysts, master mariners, marine engineers first class, lawyers, accountants, and Phds by the hatful, all from this village, a lot of them born here, or their descendants.
- DC** But they had to leave?
- Mr K** They had to leave, and that's why the actual Manx disappeared, in fact I know of one old gentleman, I was talking to a grandson of his one day, and I said, 'You didn't get any of the Manx from your grandfather?' 'No,' he said, 'he wouldn't do it, he called it the language of poverty,' – there was no money in it, it wasn't worth a penny to you to go and learn Manx those days, now the

interest, thank goodness, has survived, yes, and it's a wonderful – the little bit I know of it or learned since – I think it was a wonderful language.

DC What is now preserved down here by Manx National Heritage, is that as near as you could get to what it was when you were a youngster, or is it very different now?

Mr K It's quite different, it is a bit different, if you get an old photograph of it, now all the photographs of Cregneash in my young days was taken from that hill, what we call The Chasm Hill, because that's the way the people came.

DC That's the way, yes. But Harry Kelly's cottage would be pretty much the same, would it?

Mr K Pretty much the same, yes, yes, he was a nice old chap was Harry Kelly. I think I met him more on The Calf than ashore here, because he worked on The Calf, you see, and boating, coming across for provisions and carting sheep across, I don't think he had much to do with the cattle and the horses, that was, they were getting a bit of help with that you know, the big ones were all swum across, yes, but Harry was a great boy and he had, very often, a pet lamb, because his nephew, his nephew's son-in-law, was farming and there would always be a pet lamb fetched in to Harry to rear, yes.

DC And now you're still getting visitors down here, maybe not the same type, I mean they're coming down by car now, of course, or coach, aren't they, really?

Mr K That's right, yes, yes.

DC Do you get people coming in here and knocking on your door and saying, 'How are you?' and, 'what's it like to live here?' and so on, do you?

Mr K No, very few, very few, but as I've been trying to impress on these Museum people, if you go down to Harry Kelly's, you stand back and take a photo of the cottage or anybody in front of it, turn round 180 degrees, what is it? A load of rubbish! There's three cottages, now I don't remember the three of them, I remember two of them, gone, demolished. The last cottage I remember with the thatched roof on, belonged to the Gawne family. I was down at the well one day with my brother, the two of us went down, we heard a crack, we looked round

and we saw a puff of dust going up from the thatch and the next thing ... down goes half of the roof.

DC Really?

Mr K Well that was the end of that as a thatched cottage – that was demolished then to use to build the new barn that’s there, what I call an eyesore. Now there’s three cottages gone there, there’s the ones with the slate roofs on, well they’ve got plans to do them up, but those three that’s disappeared, to re-build those three little Manx cottages would cost a fraction of the money they’re spending on the farms, and they would have something that people would say, ‘Oh, here we are,’ – it wouldn’t matter where they were they could have one or two cottages in their picture and be something to look at, but they’re not doing anything. And then as I’ve told the people before, there’s the little cottage, *tholtan*, at the bottom of the hill, no roof, I never remember the roof on that, I must admit.

DC Don’t you, no?

Mr K No, I knew a man who told me he was born in it, but to go back in history now it’s no use, I was told this when I was little, so I didn’t know the history, but the story goes that he was press-ganged into the Navy – missing! – then he eventually arrived home minus an arm ...

DC Yes?

Mr K ... yes, and apparently, that’s his story anyway, they were inspected for the Queen, these wounded men, as they were leaving, being discharged, and the Queen came – you can sort that out for yourself when it would be – and she saw this man, ‘Oh,’ she says, ‘and here’s this poor gentleman, he’s lost an arm,’ and he says, ‘yes, Ma’am, and I’d have given the other one for you,’ you see. ‘Right, give that man another five shillings a week pension.’ God bless me – that was a week’s wages in those days.

DC Yes.

Mr K Now then, that was Cregneash in the old days, down round there, I mean I’ve known several of the old cottages like that, that’s been lived in, and

disappeared, why did they build down there, or have their homesteads there, because of what we've just been talking about, the water supply, there they had it at their back door ...

DC Yes, of course.

Mr K ... and that was the reason I reckon, why they were built all down round there.

END OF INTERVIEW