

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

**‘TIME TO REMEMBER’**

**Interviewee:** Mr Joe Corrin

**Date of birth:** 19<sup>th</sup> December 1920

**Place of birth:**

**Interviewer:** David Callister

**Recorded by:** David Callister

**Date recorded:** 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2003

**Topic(s):** Early school days  
Catching and selling rabbits  
Herring and salted mutton  
Working on a dairy farm  
Joining the Royal Navy  
The General Depression and farming subsidies  
WWII rationing and the Black Market  
Killing pigs and slaughterhouses  
Demobbed  
Working for Bride Sand & Gravel works  
Lease on *Ballakesh* farm in Bride  
First *Fordson Major* tractor in the Isle of Man  
Combine harvesters and binders  
Growing oats for *Quick Quaker* oats  
Retirement and opening shop in Ramsey

Joe Corrin - Mr C  
David Callister - DC

**DC** Joe Corrin, who – did you say you're 82, Joe, 82?

**Mr C** Yes, 82 gone.

**DC** When was that?

**Mr C** Last December.

**DC** December last year?

**Mr C** Yes.

**DC** So you're in your 83 year, now?

**Mr C** Yes.

**DC** Oh aye, right, good. And still working – that's great, as well, yea. Well, we're at Brookfield Avenue in Ramsey – Brookfield Terrace, really, isn't it, I suppose?

**Mr C** Yes, it's in the Avenue, though, it's in the Avenue.

**DC** Ah, yes, Terrace is part of the Avenue. Now, I think we'll probably start – well, we could start back with school days, if you can remember that far back, and where you went to school.

**Mr C** Oh, I went to school in Jurby, Jurby Parochial ...

**DC** Oh aye.

**Mr C** ... school. Started there when I was six and I finished there when I was 14.

**DC** Oh aye.

**Mr C** I done two Grammar School exams, but I couldn't afford to go.

**DC** Oh! You had to pay to go?

**Mr C** No – the uniform – we couldn't afford it ...

**DC** Oh, really.

**Mr C** ... couldn't afford it.

**DC** This was because your father had died, then?

**Mr C** Yes, yes

**DC** Yes. So did your mother have a struggle, really?

**Mr C** A real struggle – very much so, them days.

**DC** Oh aye. How did she upkeep the family, then, 'cos there was a lot of you, wasn't there?

**Mr C** Aye, well, the ones out working had to subscribe a few shillings and get on with it. There's one thing, we never did get any pocket money – never heard of pocket money.

**DC** Not enough to go around for that.

**Mr C** No, no – if you're lucky, and, as we got older we got out catching odd rabbit. Well, we'd have a dinner, and if we had surplus, we'd get thrupence each – three pence each for a good rabbit – selling them, you know, rabbits, but ...

**DC** What was your food like, then, because you'd be scratching and scrapping, then, wouldn't you?

**Mr C** Well, we always had a bit of land, so we could grow potatoes and all. And we always had herring in the barrel ...

**DC** Yes, of course.

**Mr C** ... and we always had mutton in the barrel.

**DC** Oh, aye, oh! mutton in a barrel?

**Mr C** Yes, salt mutton.

- DC** Yes, oh, right.
- Mr C** So, when you had potatoes and that sort of thing, and of course we had plenty of fruit – apples and plums.
- DC** Yes. Oh, you didn't do too badly then, really.
- Mr C** Not too bad!
- DC** *(laughter)* Yes.
- Mr C** But I remember a lot of dinner times that I didn't have dinner! But then that happens in every way of life.
- DC** Well that's true, yes.
- Mr C** Yes.
- DC** And, then, your mother was ... umm ... your father had died when you were about what – ten, or so?
- Mr C** About ten.
- DC** Oh aye. Now your – that must have been a bit of a blow for you, then, was it really?
- Mr C** Terrible set back at the time, because you knew there was nobody – no one for to go to for advice – I missed it very much when I grew older. There was no one I could go to for advice. Fortunately, later in life, I found a very – some very good men, who would give me honest advice, and I now know it was reliable ...
- DC** Right. *(laughter)*
- Mr C** ... so, you had to pin your faith in someone else.
- DC** Was it a big disappointment not getting to the Grammar School?
- Mr C** Oh yes, I loved going to school ...

**DC** Right.

**Mr C** ... umm ... attendance record 100%, all the time.

**DC** Yes.

**Mr C** I loved school – I would have liked to continue with it.

**DC** Yes, so you were out to work at 14, then, were you?

**Mr C** Yes, at 14.

**DC** And tell me about that – where was that, what were you doing?

**Mr C** I went out onto a dairy farm (*laughter*) to work.

**DC** You wouldn't go short on milk, then, would you?

**Mr C** Oh, yes – but it was the very thing I didn't want – we'd plenty of that at home! (*laughter*) At home, we always kept two goats.

**DC** (*laughter*) Oh, right.

**Mr C** We were brought up on goat's milk.

**DC** Well it's done you no harm, then, has it?

**Mr C** Well ... umm ... me sister died about a month ago – she was 94 ... (*laughter*) ... and another brother died – he would be 88 – the most of the family – there's only two of us left, now.

**DC** Wow ... was there enough goat's milk left to make cheese with?

**Mr C** No, we never did have some – think mother knew how to make cheese but there was plenty of milk for tea, and milk puddings, so, as you say, it didn't do us any harm.

**DC** Anyway, here you are – 14 years of age on a dairy farm, presumably milking

cows by hand, were you?

**Mr C** Yes, all by hand.

**DC** Yea – what were the hours like?

**Mr C** Oh, 70 hours a week. Three farthings an hour was what it was.

**DC** *(laughter)* Three farthings – not even a penny?

**Mr C** No ... three farthings it worked out at.

**DC** Really?

**Mr C** But – survived.

**DC** Well, in a year, then, that wouldn't come to much, would it?

**Mr C** Thirteen pounds per year – and at the end of year, I had saved eight pounds.

**DC** 'Cos you'd been subbing?

**Mr C** I ... no.

**DC** Oh, you were getting – were you getting paid weekly, were you?

**Mr C** Yes I was, there.

**DC** Oh right.

**Mr C** And I had saved eight pounds. Caught a few rabbits and sold them, and what not, and – I swore I'd never be poor again – and I won't be!

**DC** No, no, no. And that err – there was a thing about thrift in those days, with people, wasn't there, I think?

**Mr C** Oh, yes, yes, the old people – they always spoke – make provision for a rainy day. And a very good thing it is. I noticed on the wireless – on the television at

dinnertime, they were speaking on finance, and it said, '82% of the population in Britain had made no provision for any emergency.'

**DC** Hmm, I'm not surprised.

**Mr C** Damned disgusting, with all the money they get.

**DC** Right, yes.

**Mr C** Running away on holidays – you can live without holidays!

**DC** When did you go on your first holiday – have you ever gone on holiday?

**Mr C** Did I ever have a holiday? ... only when I got married. And I was 38 then, (*laughter*) and we went ...

**DC** So holidays didn't matter to you then?

**Mr C** Oh – no importance.

**DC** No.

**Mr C** They cost money, (*laughter*) and you can't spend that which you haven't got ... which the whole population today, is doing, with plastic cards.

**DC** Yes, that's true.

**Mr C** They live to regret it.

**DC** Anyway, down here milking, then, so you're up at what – half past five in the morning?

**Mr C** You had to be milking at half past five. You got up about quarter past. I remember the old gentleman in charge of the herd – wonderful old man, he was, getting on in years – much older than I, anyhow. And he would be coming up to work, and there was a cobbled street – he never called the farm, yards, as we do – it was always the street – on a farm. Coming up the street, '*clomp, clomp, clomp,*' on the cobbles, ten to five every morning.

- DC** Really?
- Mr C** Wonderful old man.
- DC** What size of herd was this, then?
- Mr C** Oh, I think we had round about ... 25 or 27 cows there was on it.
- DC** And how many people would be to milk them?
- Mr C** There would be four milking in the morning.
- DC** Oh, right.
- Mr C** All hands had to milk in the morning. No matter what other jobs they had.
- DC** Were you milking into pails – buckets?
- Mr C** A type of bucket – they be long – these buckets came in with some of the first milking machines.
- DC** Hmm – like a tall type of bucket.
- Mr C** Tall type of bucket, with a bit of turn on the top that they used to put the milking machine on, but the milking machine wasn't there – you milked into it.
- DC** No. Where did the milk go out of these, then – what happened to it after that, did it get left at the farm gate, or ...?
- Mr C** No. Oh no, a round.
- DC** Oh, a milk round.
- Mr C** Yea – pony and ...
- DC** So these pails would be lifted onto the pony and trap, and then the milkman would go round delivering it.



- Mr C** Yes, go round and deliver it – and loose milk.
- DC** Oh aye.
- Mr C** No bottles, no nothing – all loose!
- DC** And was the milk delivery man – was he the same fellow that milked cows, or not?
- Mr C** Oh yes – he had to do the milking first thing in the morning. And he'd be gone off the place at 7.30.
- DC** Where was the farm you were saying?
- Mr C** Out in Bride – Grenaby, actually.
- DC** Ah, Grenaby, Aye.
- Mr C** Yes.
- DC** So therefore you'd have a fair distance to go to various country cottages and delivering this?
- Mr C** Oh, around the town, mostly.
- DC** Oh, was it?
- Mr C** I used to go occasionally with him, on a Saturday; that was to collect money. And my word – thrupence a pint it was, and someone's only leave tuppence halfpenny!
- DC** What then?
- Mr C** Well, what could you do – take it and go?! (*laughter*)
- DC** They were short the other halfpenny, then?
- Mr C** Yes. Or you may go, and only a halfpenny on the plate.

- DC** Oh, really, oh. Did you have to keep books – keep records of that?
- Mr C** Oh, yes, yes you had to. Oh, delivering milk!
- DC** And then there'd be ... how many milkings ... two milkings a day, would there be?
- Mr C** Two milkings.
- DC** Oh, aye.
- Mr C** Yea. Afternoon milking, you use for the requirements, mostly, for what was wanted and then kept the rest cool in kegs.
- DC** Was the butter made on the farm?
- Mr C** Yes, yes.
- DC** Oh aye – who'd do that?
- Mr C** Oh, the lady of the house would be in the butter. She would do the butter. Sometimes the young fellow would do the churning – t'was all by hand.
- DC** Oh yes – wooden milk churns?
- Mr C** Yes. Some had barrel milk churns, and others had the square ones – rectangular shaped ones. But there were a number of them had barrel churns, they was big – a big lot of stuff.
- DC** Right, right. Well now, you'd be doing this milking twice a day, but in between that, there'd be other jobs, would there?
- Mr C** Oh, the carting I was, as a young fellow.
- DC** Carting?
- Mr C** Carting turnips, Swedes – home to feed the cattle.

**DC** Oh right. Oh, aye. So what'd you get – the horse in a stiff cart and down you'd go?

**Mr C** The horse in a stiff cart and off you would go. It was, it was – yes. Sometimes the fields were fairly far away, and ...

**DC** Oh aye. But somebody had already docked them and fetched them out the ground, of course, had they?

**Mr C** Yes. Generally speaking outsiders would do the dock.

**DC** Oh would they?

**Mr C** Aye – they would hire men – there was plenty of men round about. And they would go in and dock them and they'd be all in rows – out the field rowed up and back.

**DC** So were the turnips the main feed for the cattle?

**Mr C** Turnips, straw, and meal – you know, crushed stuff, really.

**DC** Oh aye, yes. What sort of cattle would these be, then?

**Mr C** *Shorthorn*, mainly, in those days. There was a few *Channel Island* ones amongst them – that was to improve the quality of the milk.

**DC** Oh right.

**Mr C** *Channel Islands* are good for cream, you see.

**DC** Yes. What happened – when did tuberculin testing come in?

**Mr C** Oh – it came in mainly after the Second World War.

**DC** So right in the middle 40s – 50s, then.

**Mr C** Yes.

**DC** Oh aye. So what – before that, then, when you were milking, there was no testing of the milk at all?

**Mr C** No, no.

**DC** Do you reckon it was good, wholesome milk, or not?

**Mr C** Nothing wrong with it – I’ve lived, and there was ten of us in the family, and most of us lived! (*laughter*)

**DC** And there was no creameries to send milk too, either, in those days, was there?

**Mr C** Well, there were one or two dairies springing up – Isle of Man dairies. And there was a Ramsey dairy here ...

**DC** Oh right.

**Mr C** ... too and some were selling to them, but most of it was sold with rounds men.

**DC** What time did your day’s work finish, then, Joe?

**Mr C** Well on the average farm you finished at six. That first farm I was on, we never finished at six – it was always getting in about half six, an all.

**DC** Did you get enough to eat?

**Mr C** Reasonably good but the next farm, much better, much better to us.

**DC** Yea, aye, yes. Did you move round farms a lot or did you stick with one main farmer?

**Mr C** The second farm I went on, the boss said to me, ‘You’ll want more wages?’ and I said, ‘Yes.’ ‘But you’re too young to go out the fold to follow the horses.’ So I left there and went to another farm. And that’s the only other I was ever on – I was five years with next farmer.

**DC** Where was that, then?

- Mr C** That was in Jurby – on the way to the airport – I remember the airport starting.
- DC** What was the soil like in Jurby – it was good, was it?
- Mr C** Medium, medium to light. All in the top end, wet and silty down at the bottom end.
- DC** Oh aye. What were the best crops that were grown out in Jurby, then?
- Mr C** Oh, oats would grow well. Oats and potatoes – it was a good area for potatoes and turnips, as we call them, swedes is the modern day, now.
- DC** Let's pick up to where you were – you were at the dairy farm, of course, but – what did you say – about five years, was it, there?
- Mr C** No, at the last farm – it wasn't a dairy farm – mixed farming in the last, where I stayed five years.
- DC** Oh wasn't it, right, right.
- Mr C** Sheep, cattle, growing oats, turnips and stuff of that nature – mangles and all – all that sort of thing.
- DC** Well, do you – you walked away from farming, then, at one time, did you?
- Mr C** Well, I did.
- DC** Oh aye.
- Mr C** Within two month I was in the Navy, anyway.
- DC** Oh, right. You're talking here about the Second World War, at the time, yes, yes.
- Mr C** The Second World War, yes.
- DC** Yes. Why the Navy?

**Mr C** Well, I didn't feel like going to do much more walking – I used do a lot of walking following horses! (*laughter*) And I thought, if they had boats, I'd get right.

**DC** (*laughter*) That's as good a reason as any, isn't it?!

**Mr C** Yes, well, it's like the fella that was joining up, joined the Navy one time, and they said to him, 'Can you swim?' and he said, 'Good gracious, haven't you got any boats?!?' (*laughter*)

**DC** Was that something you needed to do, to join the Navy, to be able to swim, was it?

**Mr C** No, no, but it was advisable.

**DC** Oh aye. How did you go about joining the Navy from here, 'cos they didn't have any recruiting office here, did they?

**Mr C** Oh yes.

**DC** Oh, did they?

**Mr C** Yes, yes. No trouble to join up. Oh you could always join up, and the army was no trouble at all. I had two brothers in the Scots Guards. They joined up before the war ...

**DC** Right.

**Mr C** ... and, unfortunately, they went out to Egypt in 1938, and they were out there when the war started, and they had to stay out until it finished – they were never home until the war was more or less over.

**DC** But as you were in farming, you could have been – that was really a reserved occupation, so you needn't have gone at all then, so why did you decide to go?

**Mr C** Oh, I mean, there was no future in working on farms. Oh, no future at all. Things were improving even in pricing in farming. You see I worked in farming when they were at their lowest ebb. When the farmers had difficulty to break

even at the end of the year but ...

**DC** What brought that about, then, because, was that part of the depression, the General Depression?

**Mr C** The General Depression, yes, yes.

**DC** Because I've heard it said that the farmers had much harder times then than they have today.

**Mr C** Oh, it was very, very difficult. They tell me, today, that it is as hard, now, as what it is, then. But I look at the world –there's a certain amount of suspicion over that, because they're talking to me from a 4 x 4 – £20,000 motor! *(laughter)*

**DC** Yes.

**Mr C** *We* couldn't afford bicycles, let alone motorcars! ...

**DC** No.

**Mr C** ... and very few farmers had a motorcar when I was young.

**DC** But there wouldn't be any subsidies, either, would there?

**Mr C** None at all, in my early days. And then, I think, during the war, just after, when there were a world shortage of food, they started to give, I think, £5 an acre if you would grow potatoes. And it all came in that way.

**DC** Yes, it all came from that, yes.

**Mr C** But, the subsidies, in my opinion, ruined farming.

**DC** Do you think so?

**Mr C** They should have stuck for higher prices or withheld – we'd have been better off.

**DC** Of course, before the war, though, there were an awful lot of farmers in the Isle of Man, and we weren't importing much food, were we?

**Mr C** No, well in the wartime, it was a good job.

**DC** Well, yes, yes.

**Mr C** We'd have starved here, otherwise. And we didn't get in full production, really, in the Isle of Man, until out in, well out in the 40s, after the war.

**DC** Right, right. But the Isle of Man was fortunate in having all this farmland during the wartime, as you say, wasn't it?

**Mr C** Oh, they were very, very fortunate.

**DC** Oh aye.

**Mr C** Fortunate because, I don't think meat was ever rationed in the Isle of Man. And bread wasn't, and all – they were very fortunate.

**DC** Was there anything of a 'black market' going?

**Mr C** I understand there was, but I wasn't here when it was going on.

**DC** Oh no, you'd be fighting for the country, wasn't you? (*laughter*)

**Mr C** But I heard a lot about it, yes.

**DC** Oh aye.

**Mr C** What – who made it 'black'? – the people that didn't have it – that made it 'black!' (*laughter*) They done their shouting about this illegal killing, you know, but err, I didn't – they would kill in the farmyard, and dress 'em and all, but that's not good enough today – oh – it would kill you, but nobody died of it.

**DC** No. So there'd be killing in the farmyard when you first went into farming?

**Mr C** Oh yes, yes. We'd always kill the pig in the farmyard, yea.



- DC** Oh aye. What procedure was involved in killing the pig, then?
- Mr C** Oh, yes.
- DC** Can you describe it for me?
- Mr C** Yes, you would get the pig out of the sty, cornered with rope on her, and when you got her out on a suitable place, you used to have an old door off a building – you’d take one of the doors off. And you’d trip her up – fall her, and one fella would sit crossed legs on her belly, holding the front legs, the man behind would hold the hind legs, and the man with the knife would kneel forward.
- DC** And that would be it – slit the throat?
- Mr C** Throat – an all over in the matter of less than a minute ...
- DC** Oh aye.
- Mr C** ... and no pain – it wasn’t cruel.
- DC** Then they’d have to be bleed, though, wouldn’t they?
- Mr C** That was bleeding with the knife.
- DC** Oh aye, so that would let the blood run out there and then.
- Mr C** Yes – well as soon, as soon as she was cut, you see, you would let her go then, and she would stand up, but she wouldn’t go very far. The blood, if she was, if your slaughter-man knew his job, she was dead in no time.
- DC** Oh aye – and what then, do they have to hang them for some days, or what, or ...?
- Mr C** Get them in the truck and over to the wash-house, and the boiler would be going, and hot water, but not too boiling, spill that all over her and shave her – take all her hair off – her bristles. And then hang her then. Wouldn’t be long, then, but you know ...

**DC** Right. And then, would this then be sold round the area, or would it be just for the farmer, or ...?

**Mr C** Well we, on the farms, we were only killing for ourselves.

**DC** Hmm, hmm – and it was permitted then, of course, wasn't it?

**Mr C** Yes, it was, in the way back.

**DC** Yea. But where would the nearest abattoir, or slaughterhouse, as they were called then – where would that be for you, then?

**Mr C** Oh, there, well, there were several ones round. There was a slaughterhouse in Andreas, and Kneale the butchers, plenty of slaughterhouses here in Ramsey. Both the butchers had slaughter houses, and then the Town Commissioners had a slaughter house – an abattoir, they called it.

**DC** Of course, of course. The method of killing in the slaughterhouse would be the same as on the farm, would it?

**Mr C** Much the same, only they used to stun them, in the abattoir. They used a poleaxe ...

**DC** Oh right.

**Mr C** ... a thing like a sledgehammer with a point on it. And a good man would strike him and hit him.

**DC** On the head, on the forehead?

**Mr C** On the head, right on the forehead. And he would drop then – stunned ...

**DC** Yes.

**Mr C** ... and while he was stunned, they would knife him.

**DC** Hmm. Now bigger animals – I mean, cattle, would have to go to the slaughterhouse, would do?

**Mr C** Oh yes, we didn't kill and eat cattle at home. No, they were all slaughterhouse jobs.

**DC** Oh aye, yea. Was there much use made of vets?

**Mr C** Every farmer I knew was a vet in his own right! (*laughter*) But if push came to shove, you'd have had a vet. But there were very few veterinary surgeons around. I remember when I was young, there used to be an old gentleman – he lived in Ramsey, somehow, he would come out on a motorbike – a motorbike he had, 'pop, pop, poppin' – doing about ten, fifteen mile an hour, (*laughter*) yea – Brown, his name was.

**DC** Oh yea – but not often called out, only in dire emergencies, then, really?

**Mr C** Well, it was too late when he was called – you had to pay him! (*laughter*) So it was generally too late. You would call him out to a mare if she was foaling wrongly, because the foal *was* worth money, but not for any other, they hear him yet – I don't know where he originated, but his speak, 'We'll give her a pudder and a tunic!'

**DC** A what?!

**Mr C** 'A pudder and a tunic!'

**DC** What was that?

**Mr C** A powder and a tonic (*laughter*). Yea, that's what he always said, old Brown, 'A pudder and a tunic we'd get for her.'

**DC** He had the same cure for them all, I suppose. (*laughter*)

**Mr C** Yes, yes – cure everyone like [unclear]. (*laughter*)

**DC** Just what happened, then, when a dead animal ... you had a dead animal on the farm – say a cow or a horse, or whatever, what happened with them?

**Mr C** Oh, generally, Litt Brothers from Holworth.

**DC** Right, so they would go down to the – the by-products, as they used to call it, isn't it, yes?

**Mr C** Yes. Otherwise you dug a hole.

**DC** Oh aye – you've seen that done, then, have you?

**Mr C** Oh, done, no trouble at all! Dig a hole but if was any sudden death with animals, you had to be careful. Get the Government vet just to look at them – he didn't cost anything, you see.

**DC** So the prime thing, then, was the money – the cost of all these things, rather than the animal welfare, was it?

**Mr C** Oh yes, yes – the cost had to come into consideration, 'cos if you don't get the money, you can't spend it. They do today, but they didn't in my day! (*laughter*) If you couldn't pay, it was, oh, shame, if you couldn't pay your bill. Oh, it wasn't long before people knew about it, too, that you couldn't pay your bills.

**DC** Now free-range eggs are a big thing today, but presumably, in your time they were all free-range, weren't they?

**Mr C** They were all free-range. October, you would – when I went to farm on me own right, like, I kept quite a lot of poultry. You used to take, every week, up to Curtis' in Douglas – you know Curtis'?

**DC** Oh yes.

**Mr C** Curtis's had – now that was all free-range.

**DC** You'd never know how old an egg was when you picked it up, hardly, would you?

**Mr C** No, but we knew that they were good, we wouldn't send any if we were doubtful, or if we found a full nest of eggs, we'd use them ourselves, we were going to use them. You didn't want to send bad eggs, because he would be in trouble ...

**DC** Of course. Now when you're farming yourself, then, what time are we talking about now – after the war, was it?

**Mr C** I started in 1946 – November '46.

**DC** What farm would that be, Joe?

**Mr C** *Ballakesh* in Bride.

**DC** When the war was over, then, were you, I mean, did you know what you wanted to do when you came out the Navy?

**Mr C** I went to the Rehabilitation Centre, in the Royal Navy. I was in the communication branch, you know – signals, wireless and radars, it was RDF when I went in it, it wasn't radar. It was run under the name of RDF, and strange thing about it, you weren't allowed to be ranked under it, either. You had to be ranked under a seaman, or a wireless operator. You could not be known to be in radar, like RDF. Because, I think, we're the only country that had it, but, then ... but, anyhow, when I came out, I went to the Rehabilitation Centre, and there was a lady there, an officer – Wrens – after to see what possibility there was, 'No possibilities for you.' I said, 'Well, what about an airport, they be going?' They haven't got any – she had nothing at all to offer me.

**DC** Not in that line.

**Mr C** Aye. And no advise to give, either. She was one of the most useless people I ever spoke to! (*laughter*) And I wouldn't give a damn, only she was a Manx woman.

**DC** Oh, that makes it worse!

**Mr C** Well, well, but ...

**DC** Was this Rehabilitation Centre in England somewhere, was it?

**Mr C** In the Royal Navel Barracks – the place you went to when you were about to be de-mobilised.

**DC** Right, emm ...

**Mr C** But a useless ... so I came home, and looking round about to see what was available; decided I would go to Canada, because I had Canadian friends who I'd serviced with in the Navy. They said it was alright to come out there, to see ... but in the meantime, I was still on leave – I had a fairly long leave due to me, you see? So I thought, now, we'd better take care of the money, so I took job with Mr Ivor Crowe, at the Bride Sand & Gravel works. So I worked there from the May to the October, in the thing. I did the levelling of the Ramsey Grammar School playing field for them.

**DC** Oh did you, oh aye?

**Mr C** Yes ... and various other little jobs, but in the middle of the summer I had taken *Ballakesh* on a lease.

**DC** That's the farm, is it?

**Mr C** The farm – in order to go in on the 12<sup>th</sup> November and that's where I started off.

**DC** So that's where you want – I mean, you'd got out of farming before, but there you were, going back into it again.

**Mr C** Well, at least I did know it! (*laughter*) The devil you know ...

**DC** And what was on that farm when you took it over, then?

**Mr C** A dairy farm – it was a dairy farm. But I didn't go in dairying. I didn't have enough money for to buy the cows to go in for dairy. I had a couple of cows, and some cattle, and a number of sheep and all that, and – but I found out I had nothing to work the land with.

**DC** What, no ploughs – well, of course, tractors aren't to be in then, either, would they?

**Mr C** Tractor was just coming.

**DC** Oh, was it?

**Mr C** I could have gotten horses, but I didn't really want them. And in the December, I got one of the first *Fordson Major* tractors that came to the Isle of Man.

**DC** Where'd you get the money to pay for it?

**Mr C** Now – a strange thing – I never borrow money. I'm like the ant – I don't borrow and I don't lend. But I borrowed the money from the Government. They had a wonderful scheme – you bought it – you'd buy the tractor, they paid for it out of the necessary documentation, and then every year after, you paid a portion off, but you didn't pay any interest.

**DC** Right – oh that was pretty good.

**Mr C** Oh, it's a wonderful system, (*laughter*) but like everything else, they ruined it. They kept borrowing, borrowing off it to buy combines – people that could well afford to buy the thing – and the fund ran out.

**DC** How much would that tractor have cost, then? Can you remember that?

**Mr C** Eh ...

**DC** Be about eighty or ninety quid or more?

**Mr C** Oh, it's more than that – two hundred and ninety.

**DC** Oh aye – that was a lump in those days, wasn't it?

**Mr C** Aye – but that included the plough ...

**DC** Oh, right.

**Mr C** ... three furrow plough with it ...

**DC** Oh yes.

**Mr C** ... so I was half way there (*laughter*) and the rest I could manage. But it wasn't long until the things ...

**DC** Were you married at this time, then?

**Mr C** No, no.

**DC** Did you have to employ men – farm workers, then?

**Mr C** Yes, yes

**DC** There'd be plenty of them available, would there?

**Mr C** Well, there was good men about and, if you're right with them, they would thing – you weren't long until things started to come up. My brother-in-law helped me a lot the first year, because he farmed not far away. And he would come and – when we were pushed.

**DC** So that worked out well for you for quite a number of years, then, did it?

**Mr C** Oh yes, yes. Farming was alright. It was hard work and as I said, I used to work ten hours a day – was working sixteen, then, when I was on me own! (*laughter*)

**DC** Different working for yourself, though.

**Mr C** Oh yes, oh yes, yes, but was used to it – never a day off, never, alright.

**DC** So you wouldn't – as you said before, holidays didn't mean a thing to you, then?

**Mr C** Not of any importance, not of any importance. Seen plenty of holidays in the Navy. I'm like the fellow in Ramsey, I was sailing, when I was in the Navy, I went all round the world, and a few other places, too! (*laughter*)

**DC** Well, you're making out that your time in the services was a holiday, but I'm sure it wasn't really.

**Mr C** Well, it was sometimes rough, rough and thing – but you don't worry about the rough times ... everyone gets a ... we were fine, strong and healthy, and that's all that really mattered.



- DC** That's true. So then as a farmer, then, you must have prospered, did you?
- Mr C** I'm not supposed to say that I did! *(laughter)*
- DC** *(laughter)* Farmers don't say that, do they?
- Mr C** No, no. I did.
- DC** Was it a good time to be in farming, in the late – in the middle forties to the fifties and sixties?
- Mr C** Up till after – well in the sixties, everything was going up. You'd buy cattle this week, and a month afterwards they'd be worth nearly double what you paid for them.
- DC** Oh aye, right.
- Mr C** You see the finest thing you'll ever get in farming is inflation.
- DC** Yes, yes. *(laughter)*
- Mr C** Inflation only hurts the idle rich. *(laughter)*
- DC** So you want plenty of inflation then, right?
- Mr C** Well, I don't now!
- DC** Not now you don't – you're one of the idle rich, now, aren't you?! *(laughter)*
- Mr C** No, no – I'm not, no, I wouldn't know what it was to be rich, anyway. How much do you have to have to be rich?
- DC** I've no idea – I'll never be rich, anyway.
- Mr C** I'm wondering ... but I'm rich in health.
- DC** Well, that's it, yes. Then, when you got your tractor, then, you got your plough, were you cropping grain at that time?

- Mr C** Yes, yes.
- DC** So what – how – were you still using the old binders and stuff like that?
- Mr C** Oh yes, I had no trouble getting a binder ...
- DC** Oh aye.
- Mr C** ... even though it was a bit of a mess of a thing, you'd get it up good enough for to do for you ...
- DC** Oh yes.
- Mr C** ... all of that.
- DC** So combines hadn't come in in your time, then?
- Mr C** Oh no, no, no – I don't think there was any combines here unless Cleland [sp ???] had one, or Lendeghan [sp ???] ...
- DC** Oh, right.
- Mr C** ... you know, up ...
- DC** Yes, yes – what, what – which grain crops were you growing?
- Mr C** Oats.
- DC** For what purpose – feed – for the farm feed?
- Mr C** Feed, feed ... and sell it to the merchants in Ramsey and that all went away for *Quick Quaker* at Whitehaven ...
- DC** Oh, did it? Oh aye.
- Mr C** ... the best oats they ever had for – they had a wonderful magin [sp ???] for oats for *Quick Quaker*.

- DC** So did you ever buy *Quick Quaker* at the grocers, then, did you?
- Mr C** Oh yes, yes.
- DC** So your oats were coming back to you in a packet, were they? (*laughter*)
- Mr C** Oh, may well have been, may well have been, may well have been! (*laughter*)
- DC** So you would be mixed farming as most of the farmers were doing, at that time, I suppose, were you?
- Mr C** Yes – all mixed. Buy your own oats back (*laughter*). I knew a man in Bride – they were thrashing, and he lost his pipe – it was in the sacks and he lost his pipe – didn't know where it had gone. And in the springtime, he bought seed oats back from the merchant, and he got his own pipe!! (*laughter*) So it must have been good stuff.
- DC** Good job it wasn't lit – he'd have set the whole farm on fire.
- Mr C** Oh, they were sucking pipes like a dummy.
- DC** They were, yes.
- Mr C** Aye – they'd – half the time they weren't lit, and it'd take a box of matches to light them! (*laughter*) The tobacco was that damp!
- DC** Yes, so you didn't smoke a pipe yourself, then?
- Mr C** At odd times, but I never had time to bother to charge the pipe and ...
- DC** Oh, it takes a lot of messing about.
- Mr C** But cigarettes I always smoked. They're not very good for you, they tell me. (*laughter*) They tell me they'll kill you. Anyway – its took sixty years for to kill me!
- DC** (*laughter*) Well, you're still alive, Joe!

**Mr C** Ah well, I've been smoking for about sixty years. I never smoked young. I didn't smoke until I joined the Royal Navy, and they were giving the cigarettes away there, so I thought we'd better be in the fashion.

**DC** Yes, yes. (*laughter*) Well, when you, when you came to the end of farming with your own farm, then, I mean you were a tenant, as you say, what caused you to give up – had you reached retirement time, or what?

**Mr C** Well, the landlord noticed the fields were getting a lot greener than they used to be, and he wanted more rent, and I refused. I said to him, 'If you do this, that, put water in the fields, and put new gates on – give you more rent.' But he wouldn't do that, so I told him I was going ...

**DC** Yes, yes.

**Mr C** ... so ... he thought he could let it – no trouble ... but he went to a house and he got told some home truths, about what he had done, what he was doing, and he offered me the farm – take it at any price I offered him. But it was too late – I decided then I was giving it up. And that's what I did – came into Ramsey, and opened a shop.

**END OF INTERVIEW**