MANX HERITAGE FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

'TIME TO REMEMBER'

Interviewee: **Mr Hector Duff**

Date of birth: **15th October 1919**

Place of birth:

Interviewer: **David Callister**

Recorded by: **David Callister**

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Topic(s):
Childhood memories of parents
Food preservation
Early school days
Career in seamanship and navigation
Cowley Crammag in Tholt y Will
Local characters
Station Master for Isle of Man Railways
Joining the Army at the start of WWII
Joining the Police Force
Working conditions and pay as a policeman
The CID

Hector Duff - Mr D
David Callister - DC

DC Hector Duff ... just a bit about you ... your parents, first of all, I suppose, really, what your father did, mother did, and so on.

Mr D Well, my father was at sea, of course, all the time I was there, and I only remember him when he was coming home from trips. And I can always remember him when – he went, sailed foreign and I can remember him when he came home, we always brought big boxes of *Turkish Delight* and that sort of thing. And he died, unfortunately, when I was only eight. And me mother at that time she was a housekeeper for a family called Perera in Sulby in Queen's Villa. And she had three children – four, one had died, but there were three of us that were still alive. And of course she had to look after us and she looked after the Perera family until they died. They were very wealthy Spanish people that came over here to live, and they lost all their money in Dumbell's Bank. So my mother had quite a hard time bringing us all up and we all had to help in the garden and that sort of thing and we used to keep hens, and a pig and all that sort of thing. And I can remember quite a lot about the days in them days – we just had to make our own bread. There was – used to get bread from the shop just about once a week and but, she used to bake – do all our own baking ... bonnags and soda cakes and all that sort of thing and ...

DC So would you buy bagged flour or something?

Mr D Yes, no, we used to get flour from the mill, the Kella Mills in Sulby ...

DC Oh yes.

Mr D ... and eggs, and all that sort of thing, we always had a crock of eggs that were saved. And we used to get stuff called *Waterglass* ...

DC *Waterglass*?

Mr D ... and *Keep-Egg* and we used to have a – because eggs weren't plentiful before – weren't available every day like they are now. We used to get them when the eggs were plentiful – they used to be about twelve for a shilling. And we used to sell them – having had hens – we used to sell them and when you go to the shop to sell them he would buy them from you at sixteen, sixteen for a shilling.

DC Oh right, sixteen for a shilling, yea.

Mr D So we had that and we had a crock with herring – we used to keep herring and another thing we always had was a piece of stock-fish, which was dried cod and used to hang outside and all flies would be on it and all sorts of things in them days.

DC It would be salted, would it?

Mr D It was salted, yes, and it was just like a hard board, and we used to cut it, a good chunk off and soak it in water overnight before we would eat it. And the herring, of course, they would be used with potatoes, or spuds and herring and ...

DC Did kippers come into your life as well, or not?

Mr D Yes, later on there used to be herring and the kipper man used to come round in a horse and cart, used to come round selling the herring.

DC Where did you get the name Hector, 'cos it's unusual isn't it? Was it a family name, was it.

Mr D No, me father was a Scotchman – me father was from the Isle of Whithorn and he was Hugh Duff, or Frank Hugh Duff. Now I was christened after Hector, Hector McDonald was a famous Scotsman, so that's who I was christened after.

DC Of course. They didn't put you in a kilt as a boy, or anything like that?

Mr D No, I never had kilt – I used to have short trousers, which are sort of very unusual now, on younger children – I always had short trousers. And I went to Sulby School until I think I was about thirteen or twelve, when, after my father died, the shipping company he worked for, which was the Blue Funnel – the Alfred Holt, they told me mother that they would train me to be a sailor if I wanted to go to sea, and so I went on *The Indefatigable* at Rock Ferry and I had to finish me schooling there as well as learning all about seamanship and navigation and all that sort of thing. So I went to sea with them – I sailed with the Lambert and Holts, which was a sister company for Alfred Holts – I sailed on the boat there – *The Voltaire* it was called – *The Voltaire*. Now that, actually, was the first British passenger boat that was sunk during the 1939-40 war, and there was one or two Manxmen on that, that were drowned. Anyway, I did a

summer and a half and I took poorly – I had appendicitis which turned into peritonitis before I got home – back into Birkenhead, so I came home to recuperate my mother suggested I would go with a friend of theirs, the Cowley – Cowley Crammag they were called, up at Tholt-y-Will, and to sort of build me strength up again. So that's what I did. And I went with Willy for two summers and a winter, but we weren't actually – it was called Cowley Crammag, but they at the Creggins, which was immediately above Tholt-y-Will, and it was just sheep farming really, and we had a – we used to go across to the Creg to – from the Creggins to Crammag every day to see the sheep and that sort of thing.

DC That would be a bit of a walk, a bit of a hike, that.

Mr D Oh, it was a hike, yes, indeed it was. And then, of course, they had meadows down at Sulby. Down the *Kellagh*, not the Kella, the *Kellagh* we called it.

DC What do they keep there?

Mr D Just hay – they used to cut the meadows for the hay for the winter for their own horses. And that entailed taking – there was two horses – you had a trace-horse, but Willy had a stable down at Tholt-y-Will, which is now the Craft Centre, there's this Craft Centre there now, and I would go down with the two horses and the stiff-cart, which was called the 'flat bogey' and we'd leave – I'd leave one, the trace-horse there, I'd leave him in the stalls there, and feed him, and I would go on with the one horse down to Sulby, and load it up with hay. And the stiff-carts, they weren't a flat bottomed one then, but being the hills, the back of it sloped up quite high, quite high, to stop the load slipping off. So I would load it up with that and go back up with that – walk all the way back up to Tholt-y-Will and then get the trace-horse in again then go up round, negotiate the bends up round Tholt-y-Will until we got into the Creggins. And there was always a fear or a danger then that, with you going up the steep hill, if the load was too high on the back, it would go down and would lift the horse up – the horse that was in the shafts it would lift him off his feet, so you always had ...

DC Did that ever happen, did it?

Mr D No, it never happened, but you always had to carry a knife – Willy ensured that I had a knife, because on the collar of the horse, there were things called hames

[sp ???] which the cart was chained into, and if you cut the strap on that the hames [sp ???] fell away and of course the horse's feet would come down onto the floor again. No, it never happened to me, but it had happened to Willy at times, I think.

DC Oh right, yea.

Mr D So that's what we ... that was sort of ... that was the job during the summer or the autumn months, getting the hay back up. And you would have all sorts of little tricks about how to load the hay and how to – you were on your own doing it, loading it. You support – teach you how to rope – to secure the hay onto the cart, because you couldn't pull it yourself, but we used to make like a little loop, and put it through like, so make it into a pulley affect so you could tighten it up quite hard on your own.

DC So this would then go back as fodder, really, would it?

Mr D Yes. That would be stored up on the ... we never used to make another stack up at the Creggins, it just ... it was all quite big barns we used to store it. Sometimes we would make a stack down in the *Kellagh*, in the Curraghs, and then go down if we wanted, if we had to in the winter to bring a load up, but it wasn't always easy to do that, because in the winter there was ice on the road, and that sort of thing, and err ...

DC The sheep wouldn't need much looking after though, would they?

Mr D Well, yes, you had to attend them quite a bit because there weren't fences in them days and there were, was, we had sheep and then we used to go, we used to help a lot with Norman Bever at that time – he was shepherding on Druidale, and we used to help with him and he with us. If our sheep strayed onto him, he would tell us, and we'd go ... they all had earmarks.

DC Oh right.

Mr D So you had little cuts in their ears so you knew which was – who was who.

DC So they weren't coated with some paint or anything like that?

Mr D Oh they were painted, they were painted, but the paint could come off or could be clipped off. So they all had earmarks, and we used to know everybody's earmarks then. On Snaefell Mountain there was a fellow called Canute [sp ???], he was there, he was a shepherd, then, and we got to know each other. They all used to help in clipping time.

DC Where would the shearing be done then?

Mr D Well, mostly up above the ... what we call the 'S' bends, up above the 'Alt.'

DC Now that doesn't mean anything to me. *(laughter)*

Mr D Well, at Tholt-y-Will, there was a path going up through the glen, up to the top of the glen, just beyond the entrance to the reservoir, and that's called the 'Alt.' There's a little hut there, now in them days, there's the Manx Electric Rail ... we used to bring people up to the 'Bungalow' and they had small coaches, or charabancs we'd call them in them days, and they used to drive the people down to the 'Alt,' and they used to walk down through the glen to Tholt-y-Will and they'd have a lunch there, and then they could either then transfer tickets, they could either walk back up again, and get the coach, or they could get a coach down, or, in them days, a horse and trap down to Sulby Glen.

DC Oh right, yes, yes. This thing called the 'Alt' sounds like the Halt to me, without the 'H', isn't it.

Mr D Yes, well, well, it's just, well it is, it's spelt A. L. T. But there is ... the gate is still there, but there's no hut or anything there now ...

DC No, no.

Mr D ... and in them days there used to be, well, three landaus they were called, travelling from Sulby Glen railway station up to the Tholt-y-Will. There used to be Johnny Redpath and Johnny Craine, Johnny ...

DC How many horses would you want to pull a landau?

Mr D Oh, one, just the one.

DC Just the one?

Mr D Just the one, yes.

DC Carry about four people on them, would you?

Mr D Yea ... hold four to six, yes. And Johnny Craine ... he was called 'Johnny the Mitch' – he was Mitch, it means match actually. It was always the same, 'Have you got a mitch? You got a mitch?' And sometimes he was called *Mr Swan Vesta. (laughter)* But 'Johnny the Mitch' we always called him. And sometimes he would have ... if he had four people as a rule with him, the landau, but sometimes he'd have six in, he would get one of us young fellows to go with him ... we'd walk behind, and then if he had to stop on any of the hills, he'd a big block, attached to a chain, which would go to the wheel to give the horse a rest. So we never got anything for that ... we got a ride back, sometimes in the landau.

DC It'd be quite a job for a horse for that, pulling up ...

Mr D Yes, it wasn't too bad, really, the main ... the biggest hill was the approach to Tholt-y-Will by what we use to call the rabbit catchers houses there. Bill, the rabbit catcher – he was an English fellow – he came over, he came over specifically to catch rabbits.

DC Did he?

Mr D Yes, yes.

DC So it was a pretty good place for rabbits, was it?

Mr D The Irishman's cottages they were called. Oh yes, we used to catch a lot of rabbits, Willy and I. Well, Willy really, he used to set the loops and we used to go in the morning and collect them. We'd get about forty and fifty some of them sixty and seventy rabbits of a night!

DC So this was like a crop to sell, really, was it?

Mr D Oh yes, oh yes. We used to then have to gut them and we had ... we used to

have to take them down into the Sulby Glen railway station where they were put in baskets of forty in a basket ... and they were all hung by their legs on a bar going across the big basket and a fellow called McArdle from Douglas used to come out and either collect them or, if he wasn't there they would go in by train into Douglas and he'd pick them up there.

DC So where did they go to – butchers shops or something, did they, or ...?

Mr D I don't know ... they ... McArdle, he'd send them, I think he shipped most of them.

DC Oh, were they skinned at this stage?

Mr D Oh no, no, no, no, they were all left with their fur on, the pelt on.

DC So you caught many a rabbit in your time then?

Mr D Oh yes, yes. We used to live on rabbits, we lived on rabbits, except at an odd time when you'd get a sheep that got a bit ancient, he would kill it and put it – salt it down, salted mutton and that sort of thing.

DC So there was no such thing as going to a slaughterhouse out there?

Mr D No, no, it was all – I can remember down at Sulby, when we lived at Sulby, we used to go up to Caesar Cowley. He was the butcher in Sulby, and his butcher boy was a ... a grown man then, Freddy Bannan, and he lived at a house called *Croit Molly Rob*, which is just at the Mill Road, or the road at old Sulby, which is the mill road leading over to the Claddagh, we always called it the Mill Road, not the Claddagh, 'cos the mill used to be down in Ballabrooie. So Willy, Freddy Bannan, rather, and Caesar used to kill the cattle, and we used to watch them many a time. They had a little shop – little, was only a little hut – in the street or on the yard, but they had a bigger hut where they used kill and they had a ring – an iron ring set in concrete in the floor, and they'd put a rope round the horse's – it was fashioned to fit round the cow's head – and they would tie it down tight, down to this ring on the floor, and then he'd a sledge hammer – a poleaxe they were called, with a big spike in one end, and when the cow couldn't move, its head was down, they used to hit it a real good whack between the eyes and they would drop – pole-axed like, and then of course they

had to skin them and bleed them and skin them.

DC So that's where the term 'pole-axed' comes from, that's it.

Mr D Probably, probably, yes, yes.

DC So were they to kill them with one blow, then, you recon?

Mr D Oh yes, definitely, oh yes, yes, yes. And there was no, in the little shop, whatever was hanging there, whatever was hanging there, there was no sort of sanitary arrangement for washing your hands or anything like that, and Freddy used to go round delivering all this – he was the butcher's boy, but he was an adult. He eventually came in – inherited the house and the land, and he used to come round on a bicycle selling the meat and you used to get a huge joint then for ten shillings.

DC Yes. Talking about sanitary arrangements – that's another whole area in the country, isn't it. Were there was no flushing toilets, or anything like that. I mean, you were talking about dry closets?

Mr D Oh yes, I mean, we only had a dry closet, and *Queen's Villa* was quite a big house in Sulby, was quite big and well-appointed and all laid out, and the toilet ... there was a toilet where you could – you had to remove a place on the back and you had to draw, you could draw out the – all the droppings into another big place, and we used to, eventually, we had a pig or course, and we used to put the straw in there, and it was all mixed, and that was all put into the garden – all into the garden for the crops. And we were sort of more or less self-sufficient for green crop and veg during the winter.

DC What about on the farm, then, what sort of toilet arrangements were there?

Mr D What, for the farmers?

DC Yes, well, what were you using there when you were working on the farm?

Mr D Oh, just go behind the hedge, nine times out of ten, if we were out walking, out after the sheep. Oh yes, there was no sort of – it was just like on the desert when we had to do it later, so I had a bit of practice! *(laughter)* Now you're talking

about even the sanitary arrangement ... in Sulby, in Queen's Villa, our water supply was from a pump, and above the Perera's had built a ... well, you'd call a conservatory now, over the pump area. Now that pump area, that – we used to pump that for all our fresh water – and immediately behind us was the mill dam, from the mills. And we were lower than the dam, so I'm quite sure that the water from the dam used come in through to our well, but we had never any problem with water ... I'm saying we didn't ... I'm still alive.

DC Well, that was rainwater in the dam, of course, wasn't it?

Mr D No, came in from the river.

DC Oh, it's from the river, that's right, yes.

Mr D From the river, yes, from the river.

DC Yes, yes ... it's just surface water but, I mean, a pump, normally, would be pumping from some distance, yes, from a well, yes, yes.

Mr D From a well, yes, yes.

DC Anyway, it didn't do you any harm.

Mr D Oh, it doesn't appear to, no, I'm still here. *(laughter)*

DC So this job, then, up on the farm, looking after the sheep and so on, you were there, what, as you say, about a couple of years?

Mr D Yes, fifteen to eighteen months, and then I left that and I joined the railway and went to work on the railway, and this would be about 1937 – '36, '37. And I worked on the railway, then, I first started at Sulby Bridge and I progressed up the ladder and I was eventually Station Master at St Germans and Peel Road. And I was there until I got ... until the war broke out in 1939, and I registered in Peel as a conscript and then I joined the army in mid-1940.

DC Yes. Well, we'll talk about the army at a later stage, I think, but you're known, primarily I suppose now, as a former policeman aren't you, really? What happened? How did you get into the police force?

Mr D Well, I came home from the army ... I was six years in the army ... and I went to work on the railway and the wages, I think it was £2 a week I got then, and I was married and had one child.

DC This was 1945 was it?

Mr D '46. So I decided that I didn't want to stay on the railway because of the wages. So I had a look around, and I was offered the chance of buying a wagon, for transport, transport wagon in them days, to work on the highroad, which was quite lucrative a job, it was worth having, and the wagon I was offered was £500, so I went into the – I asked my MHK, to see if where I could get the money and that sort of thing, so he suggested I go to the Resettlement Office in Douglas. So I went into the Resettlement Office in Douglas and put my case to them, and they asked how much I wanted and I said, '£500,' and told them why, and they said, 'Well, I'm afraid we can't give it to you – we can only lend or give money to people that were in business prior to going into the Services.' So I went back and I told the MHK and so he said, 'Well, what about joining the police force?' So that's what I did. I started then on the police force and joined them in 1947.

DC Yes, what was it easy enough to get in the police, then?

Mr D Well I think it was at that time, they ...

DC Well, ex-service men I suppose, would be preferred, would they?

Mr D Well, yes. The Superintendent at that time was Alfie Kelly, and he'd been an ex-serviceman from the first '14-'18 war, and he was rather wanting the ex-servicemen in then, and the exam wasn't difficult, I suppose, it got a little more difficult later on, but I can't say that even the medical was very, very stiff and that, so I joined, and I can't say I'm sorry I joined, it wasn't ... I don't think it's a job I'd take again, because we ... you were working Saturdays, Sundays, Christmas Days and every other day when everybody else was off. But however ...

DC You regretted not getting your lorry, I expect, as well, didn't you?

Mr D That's right, oh yes, yes. I think if I'd have probably got that, I might have been

able to branch out in later life got better, but I don't think you make any money unless you work for yourself, really.

DC No, no. When you went in the police, then, was this at Douglas first of all?

Mr D Yes, I served all my time – was 27 years I was in Douglas, the whole 27 years.

DC So this was down in the old police station, first of all.

Mr D Yes, in the old police station in Athol Street, yes, and I worked then for – I was there for two years, then I went to Spring Valley and I had a little area of my own, for Braddan and Marown, which I started on the push-bike, which meant cycling up the Mount Murray and out to Greeba Bridge and all of Baldwins and at that time, I was ... quite a lot to do because the TB testing of cattle was in being then, of course, the men that were the farmers were replacing their cattle from the mainland, and they all had to be isolated, and it was part of the police job to go round – we had to go round visiting all farms, and seeing that the cattle were properly isolated for an incubation period. And I enjoyed doing it – it meant that I got to know everybody.

DC Yes, but you also only had a bike to go round, a push-bike.

Mr D I had a push-bike to go round, yes, which ... it ... there wasn't ... I was very fortunate getting to know the farms. I used to get lots of potatoes and turnips and that sort of thing, but it was a bit difficult carrying them all on a push-bike. *(laughter)*

DC But there wouldn't be many emergencies in those times, would there?

Mr D Well, what do you call an emergency now?

DC Well, I mean, you're talking about crashes – there was hardly any cars on the road, was there?

Mr D Oh, yes. I wasn't very long on the job till I had lady that committed suicide – shot herself – that was – and I hadn't meant cycling a mile – at least a mile to the house with her husband and seeing to that. And I was involved in an awful lot of ... quite a lot of fatalities on the road. The very first one was Tom Quayle

that was editor of *The Mona's Herald*. I was involved in that – he was knocked over at the bottom of Pulrose, the road and Peel Road. And I was in a lot of incidents like that.

DC And what was the procedure then for someone who was killed? Who disposed of the body in those days?

Mr D Well, the police – we had to do all that, we – I eventually progressed from push-bike to motorbike, and on the panniers we used to carry a little tin of paint. It used wax chalk first, then we got to yellow paint, and we had to mark the position of the vehicles when we arrived there, and the body. Our first concern, of course, was the injured person, if he was injured, and we used to have to see to him. He was moved away, if he was dead, by a police ... we had to wait for a police van. And he was taken down ... the body was taken to the mortuary and we would have to undress it and prepare it for the pathologist, who was, at that time, was Dr Joe Ferguson. And after Joe, it was Dr Guy Pantin used to do it – went a bit – the doctors didn't used to do it then, Dr Guy took over.

DC When, where was the mortuary at this time, then?

Mr D Down Lake Road.

DC Oh, aye.

Mr D Yes, down Lake Road. And then, when we had, in the mortuary, the body in the mortuary, we used to ... two policemen were delegated to go with the doctor, and they used to open the body up, and the doctor would find the cause of death, obviously, and then the policemen that were there, they had to stitch it up, and get it ready again for the …

DC Really!

Mr D Oh yes.

DC And then there'd be inquests, of course.

Mr D And then, yes ... well, if, unless, depending on the result of the PM [post mortem] ... if it was natural causes, there'd be no inquest. If it was something

dodgy, it would be an inquest.

DC Suicides wouldn't happen very often though, would they?

Mr D Oh yes. Oh yes. Sudden deaths and that sort of thing, there were, I would say, on an average, two or three a week.

DC Really?

Mr D Oh yes, yes. Yes, and fatalities, there weren't so many road fatalities, but there were quite a few. I was involved in several that were double and treble fatalities and that sort of thing, even in them days.

DC To what extent did you have paperwork to fill in in those days?

Mr D Well, we had to do it. We ... if an accident happened and it was a fatality ... if it happened at ten o'clock at night and you were finishing at ten, you had to stay and finish that off, for the report to go before the Super [Superintendent] in the morning, and it had to be done that day – the same with the sudden death.

DC Well these were set forms to fill in, were they?

Mr D Oh yes, yes – quite a lot, really. I think it might have progressed a bit now, may not have so much to do now.

DC This would be hand written stuff, would it?

Mr D Oh, all hand written, yes, yes. So we had a lot of writing to do.

DC Yes. What did you wear other than helmets and dark clothing. That was all you had all the time, wasn't it?

Mr D Well it started first with the button-up necked tunic. The tunic was buttoned right up to the neck, so you could wear anything ... a collarless shirt, or anything underneath. But after that we progressed ... we got an open tunic type top and you wore then, first wore blue shirts, blue shirts and black ties. But when we were going about with our greatcoats on for instance, you weren't allowed to turn the collar of your greatcoat up – they were very, very strict. And you

certainly weren't allowed to walk about as they do nowadays without your helmet on. You were out – you weren't properly dressed if you didn't have your helmet on.

DC So it was helmet summer and winter, was it?

Mr D Oh Yes, the black ... they were all black first, and then they graduated to the white helmet in the summer.

DC What difference did that make to you?

Mr D Well, we thought if we wear the white we were a bit more conspicuous. We thought the black ones were a little bit less conspicuous ... and you could hide in the dark corners *(laughter)* because, and not for any ulterior motive, but you could be watching somebody, and if you were in a dark shadow, your white helmet would show up a lot more. And err ...

DC What about living conditions? I mean, were there always police houses that were provided?

Mr D No, there weren't always police houses, no, you had to provide your own. And if you lived in Douglas, for instance, you had to be in a position to get down to the ... take over from the next man on your next tour of duty. If you were above Rosemount you had to have bicycle.

DC What, if you lived up town?

Mr D To get to ... to ensure that you got down to work in time.

DC What, they'd provide a bike, would they?

Mr D No, you had to provide your own bicycle. There were police bicycles which you could use on your beat, but you had to provide your own bicycle to get to and from your work. And …

DC Could you buy your own house, for instance, rather than live in a police house?

Mr D Yes, you could buy your own house, but they were difficult to buy in them days.

In my case I went to buy a house which was £2,200, and I didn't have the money, obviously, but I ... they offer up the money to buy it, and err ... but to buy that you had to ask the Chief Constable ... you had to get his permission before you could buy. You had to get his permission to go to live wherever you wanted to live. You couldn't just live in Ramsey, as they do now, and work in Douglas. You had to have the Chief Constable's permission as to where you could live.

DC So you had to have his permission to buy a house?

Mr D Oh, you had to have permission, aye, yes. I went to buy and the house was £2,200, and I went before the Superintendent and the Chief Constable and they told me that it was err ... told them what I wanted and they said, 'No, it's too much, too much money for you to borrow, we're not going to allow you to borrow that.' And that was in the Conditions of Service, that you had to have – you weren't allowed to be in debt. That was the amount ... you weren't allowed to be in debt. Same thing ... another of the little things in the Condition of Service ... you had to have a new suit, a decent respectable suit to go out in, that sort of thing. But times have changed, I suppose, then maybe for the better, but …

DC So they had a fair amount of control over you, what you could and couldn't do, then.

Mr D Oh, exactly, exactly, yes, you couldn't do another job. In fact there's lots of people, not lots, but there were two or three cases that I've known during my service, where a policeman lived where his wife worked, and he was told that he either had to move out or he had to resign.

DC Really!

Mr D That was ... yes, that was the case in Douglas – the man is still alive today! *(laughter)* There were several little things like that that. Oh, it was frowned on if you ... you certainly weren't allowed to get into debt.

DC So you could be disciplined for things that you did in your own time, then?

Mr D Oh yes, yes you could, you could, yes.

DC What did they provide in the way of amenities for the police, then, in those days, 'cos we're talking about ... you were in Pulrose, and that was kind of separate, and you were your own master, in a way, there. But when you got to the old police station down in Douglas, I mean, it was pretty cramped, wasn't it?

Mr D It certainly was, yes, yes. We ... there was a canteen, where it was an old cell.

DC An old cell? *(laughter)*

Mr D An old cell, yes, and right alongside the boiler house, and it was very, very hot. Now in them days, when we started first, we used to get half an hour for a meal, if you were on afternoons, for instance, you got half an hour at teatime. And you'd come in in two different batches, but the half an hour meant that you had to leave – from the time you left your beat – if you left it at Broadway to get into the station, you had to have your meal and then be back onto your beat within the half hour.

DC Didn't give you much time to eat! *(laughter)*

Mr D Well, it did not, no, it didn't indeed. And there was certainly no facilities for cooking or anything like that – you just had to have sandwiches, and that sort of thing.

DC Chief Constables, then, you've served under a few of them, haven't you?

Mr D Well the first was Major Young, J W Young, then Beaty-Pownall, then after him, Frank Weedon. I retired when Frank Weedon ... during his term of office here.

DC Yes, yes. How remote were they from the men on the force, then, or were they close to them, or what?

Mr D I would say that of them all, Beaty-Pownall was the most err ... I didn't have a lot to do with Frank Weedon. I know him very well now, so I'd better not say too much about him. *(laughter)* I'm very, very involved with him at the moment in another little committee, but Beaty-Pownall, I thought, was very approachable. He didn't have much police knowledge, but he was approachable,

and he used to take the advice from the sergeants or the inspector as the case may be.

DC Yes. When you say he didn't have much police knowledge, that means that he ... but he's had to go up through the ranks to get there?

Mr D Oh no, no, in them days, no. In them days they didn't. He was a colonial officer in the Colonial Office.

DC Oh right.

Mr D Yes, so he had no police experience at all. Major Young was another ... he was major in the army, but Frank Weedon, of course, he had served through the ranks, and it was then, in – I don't know what time – when it would be, in the late ... in the '60s when Frank came. He was the ... in the Conditions of Service ... had all changed, and he had served through the ranks.

DC Oh right. Was there a Police Federation in your time?

Mr D Oh yes, yes. A Police Federation in them days, there was, the constables had two representatives, the sergeants had one, and the inspector had one. But we had a ... we used to nominate a secretary, who was an ordinary policeman. But he had to do that in his usual tour of duty, not now, the Federation's secretary now, that's all he does, is Federation work. Of course they get a lot more people – over 200 now. When I started ... no, not, during my service, I think the most PCs we had were about 60, or 60 to 70.

DC Big difference. How many times did you have to arrest people? Did that happen very often?

Mr D Oh yes, certainly, yes. I'd go ... I couldn't hazard a guess at that, but on many ...

DC In a week, then, you'd have two or three arrests, would you, or …

Mr D Well, not always, not always arrests, I wouldn't say that, in them days, no. But a lot of what they call ... we used to ... prosecutions you know, people started originally riding without bicycle lights, and two on a bicycle and that sort of thing. And then it graduated to driving without due care and attention and that

sort of thing and eventually into drink driving, and all that.

DC Did you ever come across anybody that had made a citizen's arrest? Were people doing that at all?

Mr D Yes, I think they have, but I was never sort of ... no, but people have done, they've held, like particularly in the summer you'd get somebody ... well, the summer visitors weren't bad as a rule, but I have had, known people that have held onto a suspect until the police arrive, and that sort of thing.

DC And then court work you must have been involved in as well, I suppose.

Mr D Well, yes, certainly we were involved in court work. And if you were ... if you arrested somebody at night – you may have been on nights finishing at six o'clock in the morning, you had to have all your paperwork done for the inspector to see it at nine o'clock in the morning, and then you had to come down for half past ten at court. And you may be sitting in court all day and then on again at ten o'clock at night, so you had a lot of time spent like that.

DC With an arrest – prosecution like that, then, you had to be pretty sure of your ground, I mean, presumably somebody in higher authority made a decision on things like that, did they

Mr D Well, yes, you see, you ... when you arrested somebody you had to say what you arrested him for, and he had to be charged and cautioned, but you had to have what was known as the 'Legal Authority,' and you would, if it was ... well, I can't give you any instances, now, but you put the 'Legal Authority' down and then the sergeant would check your report and see whether the 'Legal Authority' was correct. And he would either submit it, or say there is a case to answer or there isn't.

DC So the sergeant would be the first one to decide that, would he?

Mr D The sergeant, your section sergeant.

DC Yes, right.

Mr D And then after that he would go then, before the inspector in the morning, and

he would say yes, there is ... we will prosecute, and then you would have to get all the witnesses to court and all that sort of thing, even though you were, should have been in bed. *(laughter)*

DC If you got into court after the case was finished, the police lost the case, was there then any recrimination on the constable, or not?

Mr D No, no not that I know of, no not that I know of.

DC No inquiry afterwards, then?

Mr D No, there used be ... I can remember on one occasion I went ... this is in ... it didn't arrive at court. I got somebody for drinking after hours, and this was when I was a very, very young constable, and I was on a push-bike, and two of us were on push-bikes, and we put a report in as we thought was good, and we put in the sergeant, I think the sergeant must have submitted it, as we call it to the inspector, and we called into the inspector the next morning, even though we were off duty, you still had to go in – oh, you had to go in – you were told 'Be here' and that was it, and he said ... we had put in that we'd seen these two or three people, whatever they were, with an amber coloured liquid in front of them. Well, you see, we were told then that you had to state what it was, so we knew, for in future, we'd say it was beer – we'd ask them what it was and that sort of thing. Little things like that you can remember, but …

DC Murder cases come your way, no?

Mr D No, no.

DC That would be something to avoid, wouldn't it.

Mr D There was the one murder case, but I wasn't involved, but I wasn't involved personally, but I was there, because I can remember being at the house. It was a boy that eventually was proved that he'd killed himself with the sword, rather than the person that was alleged to have done it.

DC Did you get involved in any chases?

Mr D Chases? Oh yes, several, yes, there was quite a lot of chases.

DC What, by vehicle, by car?

Mr D Well, on foot and by car, but I can remember on one occasion, not myself, I was, there were two of us on the patrol cars, and patrol car had an accident, knocked a chap off a scooter, and I was on nights at that time – I was finishing at five o'clock in the morning, and I was told to be down at the station – they used to send a policeman up to the house – be at the station at such and such a time – you didn't, you had no option – you had to go. So we were there, and George Moore was then the Attorney General, and George explained to us in no uncertain terms, that if we were involved in an accident, whilst driving a police car, and anybody was injured, the Government wouldn't support us unless we were going to somewhere with a matter of life and death – if it was only just chasing another car for speeding or that sort of thing, they wouldn't support us at all. But I – and we wouldn't be cover on insurance, so I don't know whether that sort of situation is still in force or not, but we were told in no uncertain terms that we wouldn't, we'd – if we were involved in an accident it was on our own head.

DC That all sounds like horrendous discipline all the time, but there must have been a bit of fun as well, was there?

Mr D Oh, there was lots and lots and lots of cases, certainly a lot of cases, yes, yes. We had a ... we all ... there's lots of chaps on the force, one in particular, he was all ... was the life and soul of the party. Actually before he joined the police force he was driving a baker's van, a horse-drawn baker's van, and it was at the time when 'Halt' signs were just first put on the road, and it used to be 'Stop,' not 'Halt.' And he was coming down driving his baker's van, bread van, down Upper Church Street, turning left into Athol Street, and the 'Stop' sign was there, well, of course, the horse just drove straight on over it. So the poor driver, he eventually became a policeman, this chap, he was summoned and charged for driving over the 'Halt' sign, or 'Stop' sign without stopping. So he was up before High Bailiff Johnson it was, at the time. And they said to him – he was in court, and they asked him did he have anything to say, and said, 'The only thing I can say, your Worship, is the horse couldn't read!' (*laughter*)

DC Did he get off?

Mr D No, he ... I think there was quite a ripple of laughter around the court.

DC I suppose TT race time was a time when you'd have to give up your weekend and everything else, would you?

Mr D Oh yes, during race week you didn't have a week off – a day off – during the week. And if you were on nights, of course, you had to be up in the morning, to catch the police van. The police van used to take you to various points on the course, so you'd little or no sleep after going off at six o'clock and then if there were delays, you could be late getting home, and then you'd a couple of hours and you were back on again at ten. Now, for example, I'll give you an example, if you were on the Monday race, you'd be out the night before, Sunday night, you'd come off Monday morning, you'd go out on Monday for the races, maybe finish at four or five o'clock, you'd come back in, and you'd work all that night on the Monday night again, on Monday night, and on Tuesday, there would be what they called the 'Grand National' up at Douglas Head. So the night section used to have to come out and start at about six o'clock at night – six o'clock in the evening, and you'd work through six o'clock in the evening, and you'd be up at Douglas Head, at the 'Grand National,' and you'd get – that would be finished at ten, you would get half an hour to go home and have your meal or whatever, and you'd work all through that night, you'd come off at six o'clock on Wednesday morning and you'd go out to the races at nine o'clock in the morning, and then you would be back again 'til five o'clock, so you were all that spell without any sleep or rest or …

DC So there was no chance to get your head down at all, really?

Mr D Oh no, no chance whatsoever, no whatever. I can remember on one occasion the Governor was going up to the 'Grand National' and he spoke to some of the boys that were on. I, at the time was on the motor patrol – I wasn't quite so bad – but he spoke to some of the boys who were on night, and he was astounded – he couldn't understand why they had to do such long hours, but we were – it was only a small force then, and every man that was available was used, utilised and …

DC A lot of overtime pay, was there?

Mr D Oh there was a lot of overtime, yes, but it used to take about three or four months before we got it, *(laughter)* before we got it.

DC *(laughter)* Before you got the money!

Mr D Yes, it was hard-earned, it was hard earned. At that time I can remember one of our lads used to work it out. It was tuppence a minute *(laughter)* – worked out at tuppence a minute, so it wasn't a lot, but it was hard-earned. And we used to ... when the races were on, we used to like some of the slow men that were going on, and in fact, one of them used to suggest that we should pay their entry fees for some of them to come into start again next year so as to give us a bit of extra overtime, because the longer they were finishing, of course, the longer we were on duty.

DC What about lost property, Hector. I mean, there's a lot today, but presumably there must have been a bit in your time, as well?

Mr D Oh, a terrific amount, yes. Oh, I would say more in them days than now, because I can't imagine people now finding purses and odd bits and things going from town up to the Police Headquarters to hand it. Oh, I would say that there would be, oh, during a monthly period I would say there would be probably two or three hundred articles handed in a month.

DC As much as that?

Mr D Oh yes, oh yes, yes.

DC What sort of things, then?

Mr D Oh, everything you could ... valuable stuff, as well. There's been ... can't imagine people not trying to ... looking to see, but we'd hundreds of keys, for instance, and that sort of thing.

DC Bicycles are busy now, I should think.

Mr D Bicycles, yes, an awful lot of bicycles, good bicycles too, never claimed.

DC Really?

Mr D Yes, and they used to be originally ... eventually we sold ... we used to have a police sale, and the police were allowed to buy it, but then, after a while they

decided it wasn't a good thing, so they're all sold by tender now, to whoever submits a tender.

DC So when ... do they list these things in the newspaper or something or other?

Mr D No. I think they ... yes, they do put an advert to say there's going to be a lost property sale, and anybody interested can come and look over the stuff and put in a bid.

DC Yes, I see, right. And they go to the highest bidders, presumably, do they?

Mr D Yes, yes.

DC Right. Can you remember anything unusual that was handed in, then?

Mr D No, I can remember on one occasion some money going missing, and I wasn't actually in charge at the time, and there was money going missing and when the lost property was kept ... it came into the lost property office ... it was always kept in a drawer for two or three days and then, whoever was in charge of lost property would then remove it to another safe-keeping – we thought nobody would come in for it then. And it was all tabulated and numbered – you could find quite easily. And anyway this money was kept going missing and we didn't know what to do. It was quite a serious thing, money missing in the police force and then of course everybody was under suspicion. But anyway it ... we found ... at that time there was a detention quarters above the old police station in Athol Street, and there was some lads in there, in detention, they could climb out through the windows and down into Athol Street, down, clambering down the drainpipe in Athol Street, and they were going out and down the town, having chocolate and ice-cream and that sort of thing and then getting back up, climbing back up and going into their bedrooms again. And they were responsible for the money that was missing.

DC Ah yes, yes. Putting people into detention, then, wherever you were working – I mean if – when you were at Pulrose, for instance, if you had to put somebody into detention, what happened, how did you get them from there? They'd presumably have to go down into Douglas, would they?

Mr D Yes, I would have to walk with them to my house where I was stationed and

phone up Douglas to get a police car or a police van when I would detain this person and they would take them in then.

DC So would you handcuff them then normally?

Mr D Not a lot of ... no, very, very seldom we used the handcuffs. Yes, very seldom.

DC What would you use a truncheon for, if ever?

Mr D Well, *(laughter)* I wouldn't like to hit anybody with one, because they were very, very hard and solid and I should imagine they'd do quite a bit of damage. I know I never had to, I don't think I've ever withdrawn it, because we used to manage, manhandle them a little bit, but we used to manage.

DC They were just a deterrent, those truncheons, were they?

Mr D Well that's right, yea, exactly, yes, yes.

DC You'd have a whistle, presumably?

Mr D A whistle, yes, yes, and we had a way …

DC What use was the whistle, then?

Mr D Well, if another policeman on an adjoining beat heard it, he would immediately go to your aid.

DC It wouldn't help you much in the Spring Valley/Braddan area, would it? *(laughter)*

Mr D *(laughter)* Oh, no, no, not at all, no. I don't know whether, I don't think they have whistles now.

DC I don't know.

Mr D I don't think they do.

DC No. You can see them in short-sleeved, white shirts, now, in the summer, can't you really?

Mr D You can ...

DC No tunics.

Mr D ... with the yellow waist coats, without helmets, *(laughter)* which you could mistake them, I'm quite sure, for an ordinary road-worker or everybody else wears these fluorescent jackets now, which I think is wrong, I think they should always keep their helmets on, but they don't seem to want to now.

DC Was the CID something that kept itself separate then, from the general constabulary, was it?

Mr D Yes, I don't know why you should ask that, but there was ... there was a definite wall between us, the uniform and the CID.

DC Really?

Mr D Oh definitely, yes, yes.

DC Yes, so 'Never the twain shall meet,' really.

Mr D Oh no. We used to ... they'd get on when they used want to know something, but they would very, very seldom tell the uniform men anything, no. No, they were a little bit above us, I think.

DC Right. So there was no ... uniform men didn't go into the CID, did they?

Mr D Yes, from time to time they did, and work with them, yes. They used to do a month at a time and that sort of thing.

DC Oh aye.

Mr D But there certainly was a little wall between us – that's how I would describe it. *(laughter)*

DC Yes. *(laughter)*

Mr D I got on well with them all, and if I wanted any information I would go to them and when I was on my own, had my own little district, they used to come to me when they wanted to know something. But I, as I said before, when I was going round on the farms I got to know everybody, nearly everybody that was in the parish and I'd got good contacts, and if I wanted to know who anybody was, I knew where to go to find out all the information I wanted.

END OF INTERVIEW