

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

**‘TIME TO REMEMBER’**

**Interviewee:** Mrs Kathleen Green

**Date of birth:** 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1912

**Place of birth:** Dalby

**Interviewer:** David Callister

**Recorded by:** David Callister

**Date recorded:** No recording date

**Topic(s):** Early childhood years  
Attending School for the Blind in UK  
Working as a carer  
Working in a boarding house  
Farming  
Butter making  
Milk round  
Getting married  
Running a fishmongers shop  
The Dalby ‘Spook’  
Poetry recitation

**Kathleen Green - Mrs G**  
**David Callister - DD**

**DC** Kathleen Green, who was Kathleen Christian, and we're in Saddle Mews at the moment, and it was Graham Looney who put me in touch, Graham is your nephew, is he?

**Mrs G** You know the girl that's just been in, that's his mother, she's my niece.

**DC** Oh, she's your niece, right, right. Now, so you were born in Dalby on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1912, and you're going to tell me some of your memories, I suppose, it would be a quiet place up there, Dalby, was it?

**Mrs G** Three brothers, no sisters, three brothers, now me youngest brother, Herbert, he was in the war and was decorated on the field.

**DC** Was he?

**Mrs G** Yes, he was, the DCM [Distinguished Conduct Medal]. My eldest brother, he was mostly in farming, most of his life, till he'd a bit of a fight with me father and then he went over south to live and, I don't know what – I think it's someway to do with the airport, or driving for somebody he was, yes. And my second brother, he was going to be a forester, he did so long at Foxdale and then he went away to Wales to learn to be a forester. While he was in Wales he got dermatitis in his legs, because the ground was so rough, you know, and he got a bit of dermatitis in his leg and that didn't fit very well with the rest of the boys in college, so he left there and he met up with a girl and they had a paint and paper shop, so he joined them. And he did painting and papering all the rest of his life.

**DC** All his life.

**Mrs G** Yes, well, his wife died while they were in the business and then of course he wasn't, sort of, wanted the same, you know.

**DC** What was your father like then, what do you remember of your father?

**Mrs G** Like?

**DC** Yes, what do you remember of him?

**Mrs G** Oh, he was a good father – his bark was far worse than his bite. The boys didn't take a big lot of notice, some shouting, at all, but he was a good enough father to us, oh yes, he was.

**DC** He'd lost his own father when he was very young, had he?

**Mrs G** When he was twelve, his father and mother – his father died when he was twelve and the mother died very soon after and left six of them, yes.

**DC** He must have had a hard time coming up then?

**Mrs G** Well, an auntie took him to rear, that was living at Foxdale – they were born at Foxdale and an auntie that had a whole scutch of kids, she took him to rear him and he lived up at Foxdale with her till he was, like right to leave school, and all. And then he came down Dalby way to work on farms.

**DC** And met your mother then, did he?

**Mrs G** And that's where he met me mother.

**DC** What was her name?

**Mrs G** Quirk, Ella Quirk.

**DC** Ella Quirk.

**Mrs G** Yes – mother, yes.

**DC** Now what, I mean your earliest memories then, obviously, would be what, playing in the school yard or even earlier than that?

**Mrs G** I tell you one thing I can remember, my father, I was awful spoilt with me father when I was little.

**DC** Because you were the only girl?

**Mrs G** And I was the only girl. And you'll not – have ever you heard of a chapel up at Glen Rushen, you know where the mines used to be?

**DC** I know, yes.

**Mrs G** Glen Rushen, there used to be mines up there, well there was a chapel up there as well, but, a village, like, you know, and I don't know how big it would be but I was very small – he was going to the anniversary and I wanted to go too, so he took me all the way out to Glen Rushen, I don't know how I got out, but he said all the men from the anniversary had to take turns each at carrying me home.

**DC** So you'd only be about two or three then?

**Mrs G** I would only be about three or four, no more than that, no, spoilt, spoilt, a good slap would have done me far more good, you know.

**DC** You didn't get a good slap then?

**Mrs G** No, not from me father, no, no, no, no.

**DC** Was your mother tougher than him then, or what?

**Mrs G** No, my mother was very easy going.

**DC** Was she?

**Mrs G** Extremely easy going, yes, yes she was. She had a hard time.

**DC** Where did you go to school then?

**Mrs G** Dalby, Dalby School.

**DC** What do you remember of that?

**Mrs G** You know where it is?

**DC** Yes, oh aye, what do you remember of school?

**Mrs G** Oh, I was all right at school, and then when I was thirteen they thought I was studying too much and the Board of Education or somebody sent me and another girl from Douglas away to a blind school in Preston, us two, so I was

there from about March till Christmas, in a blind home in Preston. Well, I couldn't learn Braille or anything, I couldn't do it, but I learnt a lot of other things like, you know, art and music and those sort of things, I did well.

**DC** So you always had bad sight then, did you?

**Mrs G** Not good sight, no, no, not – me mother was told it was neglect at birth was wrong and I think they had a lot of trouble when I was just little, I think they had, because my mother and father hadn't the money you know to take me to the specialists and I think me grandfather was doing it, you know, taking me to the specialist. But I, I had quite good eyesight, you know, I could ride a bike and all, you know, the same as everybody else. But the school – one of our teachers told me mother and father that I could have been a school teacher had I had the eyesight, yes.

**DC** Ah, right, so you were quite a bright girl then?

**Mrs G** I had the brains but not the ability, yes, the brains.

**DC** Well, it would only be very basic, your schooling in those days?

**Mrs G** Oh, in those days not a lot, no, no. And then when I – as I say I spent me thirteenth year at this blind home and then I had to stay on another year at Dalby school to kind of catch up, you know. But I couldn't go to Peel School because then the age had passed, I think you had to be twelve or thirteen to go, but me three brothers went to Peel school.

**DC** Did you have problems with other kids because of your ...

**Mrs G** Oh, no, no, no, they all accepted it, yes. As a matter of fact I don't think very many of them realised that there was anything wrong with me, you know, no.

**DC** So what happened after you left school then?

**Mrs G** Now, when I left school, I left school at fifteen and then I went to work as a maid for a parson and his wife. When I was sixteen I went to Douglas to look after a little boy in a boarding house, I had complete care of him from morning till night, he – when I went there I was sixteen and he was one, and I was with

him all the time till he was four, and then they paid me off because they could look after him themselves, you know. But in the next summer they discovered that they couldn't look after him, so they came out to get me, but they were too late, I'd got another job, yes. And then I was working in a boarding house in Peel and I've never been idle, you know, I've always been going, working in a boarding house in Peel, and till the end of September, like, you know.

**DC** So looking after this little boy, then, because you were pretty young to be looking after a little boy.

**Mrs G** Sixteen I was, and he was one, yes.

**DC** So you had to learn pretty quickly how to handle him, did you?

**Mrs G** Oh, I had, from when he wakened in the morning till he went to bed at night I'd full control of him, meals and everything.

**DC** Oh did you, yes.

**Mrs G** Yes, I did, yes.

**DC** And did you get, did you see him then in later life ever?

**Mrs G** No, only about once, when I grew up, I think it was only about once I seen him. A nice little feller he was though, but I've got photographs of him, you know, when he was little, like, you know, I used to bring him out home on the bus and we've got pictures of him then, yes.

**DC** Then you went to Peel to work then?

**Mrs G** And then, oh, I only did one year in a boarding house in Peel and then me father bought a farm and then we all went to live in the farm, the farm, now do you know Dalby at all?

**DC** Not very well, no.

**Mrs G** Well, you know the Niarbyl road corner, well, isn't there a big house on the corner?

**DC** Yes.

**Mrs G** Well, there.

**DC** What was that farm called?

**Mrs G** *Ballacallin.*

**DC** *Ballacallin*, yes, yes. So that changed your life a bit really, did it?

**Mrs G** Oh, I loved farming, yes, I wouldn't do anything in the house if I could help it.

**DC** What, you'd rather be out in the fields?

**Mrs G** Out in the fields, yes, and I reared a little foal from the day after he was born, his mother died, till he was a mare.

**DC** What do you have to do to rear a foal like that then?

**Mrs G** Well, the vet gives you the instructions what to feed it with, like, and then of course once it gets a bit big he can eat grass, you know. And I looked after it, brought it in at nights, and all.

**DC** Did you give it a name?

**Mrs G** Yes, she was called Jean. And when they're so big they have to be broken in, that means all their capers, playing about, is stopped and they've got to learn to be handled by men, you know.

**DC** What, to have a saddle and a bridle and so on?

**Mrs G** No.

**DC** Not yet?

**Mrs G** They had just loose tied, I think it had a bridle on it, and you – one man holds it and another feller whips it and whips it and whips it until there's no more fun left in it.

**DC** Really?

**Mrs G** And when they were doing my little one there were people in the boarding house across the road and they saw me father and me brother doing it and they were awful mad, they were jawing and shouting and screaming, and saying, 'Stop that! Leave that horse alone,' in fact I think they said they would phone the police if they didn't stop, and me father said, 'Let's call it a day,' and that was it.

**DC** But is that what you had to do with a foal then?

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, there's not a foal three-quarters grown, you know, to be a horse like, you know, and after that I could do anything with it, you know, but it got, as it grew older, it got that it wouldn't let anybody go near it, except the family. So when it came to be sold they were saying it would do for dog food. I don't know for sure, whether it was right or not, but a farmer didn't buy her, no.

**DC** What else did you do on the farm then?

**Mrs G** Oh, I thinned turnips, and docked turnips and worked with the men – I was out with the men all the time.

**DC** So what, you'd be in your twenties or so then?

**Mrs G** From when I was twenty till I was forty odd.

**DC** Really. You were one of the first Land Girls then, were you?

**Mrs G** I was a Land Girl.

**DC** Oh, were you a Land Girl?

**Mrs G** Well, not a Land Girl but a land girl as such.

**DC** But you were on the land.

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, yes, yes.



- DC** People today wouldn't know what docking turnips means.
- Mrs G** They wouldn't, would they, no, no. Oh, I docked turnips.
- DC** Sacks round your knees, was it?
- Mrs G** Oh, no, that's thinning turnips, that.
- DC** Oh, thinning, thinning down the ridges, that's right.
- Mrs G** Oh, that's it.
- DC** Docking turnips was different then, how did you do that, with a sickle.
- Mrs G** You pulled it up by the top of it, you know, the blossom like, and you knocked all the root off with your sickle and then you turned it over and knocked the top off with the sickle, and that's called docking turnips.
- DC** Docking turnips. We talk now about sickles, I know what a sickle is, and a scythe, but young people today wouldn't have a clue.
- Mrs G** Wouldn't know what they were, no they would not, no, no.
- DC** So here you are then, you're on the farm, you've been docking turnips, you've been thinning turnips, you've been looking after foals, a lot of killing had to happen on the farms then, didn't it?
- Mrs G** Oh, well, not a lot, we were killing a pig now and again.
- DC** You wouldn't get involved in that, would you?
- Mrs G** No, I wasn't, no. And they used to kill a sheep at an odd time, like round the mill time. Now the mill was a busy time because you had all the corn, you know, had to be cut by binder or reaper, whatever, and you had to put them all, what they called stook, stand them up, to get dry, and then you had to have them carted, all carted in and put in a thing called a stack. And then I used to be on the stack helping the man that was building the stack.

**DC** Did you, with a pitchfork in your hand?

**Mrs G** No, no, no fork, just hand them to him.

**DC** Oh, hand them in, right yes.

**Mrs G** As somebody down below would be throwing them up I'd be catching them and handing them to the man that's building the stack, yes, yes. Done a fine lot of that in my day, yes.

**DC** And the mill day of course there would be a lot of men then, wouldn't there, to feed.

**Mrs G** In the teens of men, yes, all – and all wanting lunch, tea and cake or biscuits in the middle of the morning, and then full dinner, that's what I'm saying, we'd be killing the sheep, you know, or a pig, for to cook, you know, we'd have plenty of meat for the mill day, yes. And then there'd be tea again in the afternoon for them, oh, it was a very busy day, a very, very busy day.

**DC** But you liked it, didn't you?

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, yes.

**DC** Did you look forward to mill days then almost, did you?

**Mrs G** Well, not really, because it was a hard day.

**DC** Hard work, was it?

**Mrs G** Hard work, yes, oh, yes, I liked it enough. And then you see the men that came to us would all be belonging to farms, you see, and then when their turn came for the mill our men was going out to help them, you see, they wouldn't be home then, they'd be gone for the day then, to help other mill men, you know, yes, yes.

**DC** Did you make butter on the farm?

**Mrs G** Oh, I did.

**DC** Tell me about the whole thing of making butter, what did you have to do, start to finish.

**Mrs G** From start to finish. Now we did have, late on in life, we had a thing called a separator, which separates the milk from the cream but before that you stood the milk in dishes overnight and the cream comes to the top and then you kind of take a spoon and get it all off and put it into a thing called the crock. A crock – have you seen a crock?

**DC** Yes, yes, I know what a crock is.

**Mrs G** Yes, put it in the crock, but when we got a separator it separated the milk from the cream – ready, you know, you didn't have anything, trouble with it. Now then we had a thing now called a churn, a wooden contraption, and the day you were going to churn you scalded it out with hot water, and then you put your cream in, took the temperature of it – I've forgotten what the temperature was now you had to have – and you put the lid on and then you keep turning this churn over and over and over again till it eventually turned into butter.

**DC** How long would that take then?

**Mrs G** Oh, according to – taking a while, yes, take you maybe an hour churning.

**DC** And you'd be just turning a handle really.

**Mrs G** That's all, yes, and the milk was going back and forward in this churn, yes. And then it would suddenly turn into butter. And then you took the butter off the churn and put it into a dish called a *mhelliah*, [sp ???] with water, cold water in it, and then you give it two good washings in cold water, to get all the milk out. Then when you get the milk all out, you're sure that you've got all the milk out, we had things called butter pats, and you patted it into shape.

**DC** Now these were little wooden patters, weren't they?

**Mrs G** Yes, yes, and you put it on the – you make sure that all the water's out and then you put it on a slab, a stone slab, and you pat it with these two little things, into place, and then you can put a decoration on, whatever you want, you know, pat it on. Oh, and before that though, you've got to measure it, weigh it.

**DC** Oh, right, yes.

**Mrs G** You see, if you're doing half pounds or pounds of butter, whichever.

**DC** Now, would there be some salt put in it?

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, you had to put salt in, oh, yes, I forgot about that, yes, oh, yes, you had to put salt in, yes. And then you patted it into these little shapes you see and then you'd stand it on the cold slab till they're hard, you know, until you're ready. If you get customers coming to buy, you've got to have greaseproof paper, you know, to put it in as well.

**DC** So you had to wrap it as well, did you?

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, yes.

**DC** This would be done in a, like what they would call the dairy, I suppose.

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, we had a dairy, yes, we had a dairy, yes.

**DC** So that was a pretty cold area was it?

**Mrs G** It's a very cold area, yes, yes. And, well, you could keep the eggs in as well, that's about all, yes.

**DC** And you wouldn't get paid an awful lot for the butter when you'd finished, would you?

**Mrs G** 1/6d a pound, we'd get, 1/6d – and plenty of trade for it, oh aye.

**DC** Right, where would you sell that, then, would they come to the farm?

**Mrs G** Round the village.

**DC** Round the village, aye.

**Mrs G** Yes, mostly, yes, round the village.

- DC** And there would be a milk round as well?
- Mrs G** And we had a milk round as well, yes, yes.
- DC** You didn't do the milk round, did you?
- Mrs G** No, the people came to the house for the milk.
- DC** Oh, did they?
- Mrs G** Yes, but during the war, when the war came, I had to deliver the milk down to *The Creglea* where the soldiers were, I had to deliver that every day, yes.
- DC** And what was that in, what container, what sort of container?
- Mrs G** A churn, a churn thing.
- DC** Oh, yes. They used to have milk in kegs, didn't they?
- Mrs G** Well keg, it was, like, it was a keg.
- DC** That's what it was, with a big metal lid on the top.
- Mrs G** That's right, yes.
- DC** Metal containers.
- Mrs G** Yes, yes, deliver that every day.
- DC** They'd be heavy enough to lift, wouldn't they?
- Mrs G** I'd a wheelbarrow.
- DC** A wheelbarrow? Oh, you didn't have a little horse and cart, then.
- Mrs G** No, I'd a wheelbarrow, and it was all downhill so it was easy enough, yes, yes. It wasn't too bad, no.

**DC** And where were these soldiers billeted then?

**Mrs G** All round *The Creglea* farm.

**DC** Were they?

**Mrs G** Yes, they were soldiers round there, *The Creglea* farm, at the top of *The Creglea* farm it branches off on your right as you go down towards the Niarbyl. There used to be a little shed there where an airman used to be on duty all the time watching in case there'd be any planes coming over, you know. And they were on duty there all the time and right at the top there used to be a big gun, I don't know what they were using it for, but there was a gun there.

**DC** Was there?

**Mrs G** Yes, yes, yes, I used to get up and swing it up.

**DC** Well, you were still single then, were you?

**Mrs G** Oh, Lord, yes, oh, yes.

**DC** So you'd get to know some of these soldiers then, did you?

**Mrs G** I married a soldier!

**DC** Ah, right.

**Mrs G** Yes, from London.

**DC** From London.

**Mrs G** Yes, yes.

**DC** What was his name now?

**Mrs G** Freddie Green.

**DC** Freddie Green, yes.

**Mrs G** And he was a fishmonger.

**DC** Oh, aye.

**Mrs G** And after we were married a while, he was working in Douglas, we got the chance of buying a shop in Peel so he bought the shop in Peel and then we were there for years in a little fish shop ...

**DC** You were in the right place for fish then.

**Mrs G** Oh, yes, but it wasn't so good because you see the fishmonger, he knew all the fishermen you see and he could get the fish cheap, from the fishermen going out, the herrin' and all. But we couldn't and we had to have ours brought from England, you know, and it was fairly expensive, yes it was.

**DC** So the local fellers wouldn't sell to him then, or what?

**Mrs G** They would only sell to the like of Harry, you know, and then there was another feller came and I think he got in with one or two of the – they weren't having a lot of fish, you know, but they would catch, you know, enough to keep them going. But we had to send away to Fleetwood for ours.

**DC** Really?

**Mrs G** Yes.

**DC** Well, you wouldn't be able to – you wouldn't compete with the others then, wouldn't you?

**Mrs G** He couldn't, not very well he couldn't, no, no. The only time we could do well was kippers, posting kippers.

**DC** Oh, posting kippers, yes.

**Mrs G** Oh, aye, we had a good trade there, yes.

**DC** Where would they go to, mostly to England, was it?

- Mrs G** England and Ireland, yes, yes.
- DC** So Peel then, when, in the holiday years, was a busy place in the summer, was it?
- Mrs G** It was busy, yes, yes. Two pair of kippers in a – wrapped in greaseproof paper and put in a box and an address label on them and a stamp on them, half a crown.
- DC** Yes, half a crown, that's right.
- Mrs G** That's what they were.
- DC** I remember that, that was a very important price, wasn't it?
- Mrs G** Half a crown, yes.
- DC** A half a crown box of kippers, yes.
- Mrs G** Yes, and I think if you had three pairs, I think it was 3/6 or something, and my word we were busy.
- DC** They'd be, would they be caught, the herring caught locally.
- Mrs G** All locally, oh, Lord, yes, oh, yes, yes.
- DC** Where did you get them from, the kippers, from Moore's, or ...
- Mrs G** Curtis. And then we found we couldn't do it because the prices were going up, you know, and to get the fish from across we found it too dear.
- DC** Well, I've spoken to quite a few people about the Dalby Spook but I think you'll have known Voirrey yourself, won't you?
- Mrs G** Oh, yes, yes, knew the family and all.
- DC** What about – tell me about the family first?



**Mrs G** They were very nice people, very polite, and they did quite a good business with all this capers about the Spook, they had people coming from London and all over the place to hear about the Spook, and they would tell them all these tales about what the Spook could do and what it couldn't do and all, and there was no such a thing.

**DC** No such thing?

**Mrs G** No.

**DC** What, a talking mongoose?

**Mrs G** There was no such a thing, because I'll tell you why we could prove it. It was awful good fun, you know, when the mongoose was about, all the young people from Peel and all over were coming up, you know, fellers and girls, and it was terrible fun, you know. Every night when it was nice and fine you all went up to see the Spook. There was nothing there, you know, only young people all fooling about, you know, and doing.

**DC** Did you go to see the Spook?

**Mrs G** Yes, regular.

**DC** And what happened in the house then, I mean what were you supposed to see, then?

**Mrs G** Well, we were supposed to see, I don't know what he was supposed to be like, some were saying he was like a weasel and some were saying he was a sort of a mongoose, I couldn't tell you what we were supposed to see, but ...

**DC** But you never saw a mongoose then.

**Mrs G** Oh, Lord, no.

**DC** Or a stoat or a weasel or anything?

**Mrs G** One night after it was all gone quiet and there weren't anybody going up there were three girls of us decided we would go up and see was the Spook about. It

was a lovely moonlight night, so we went from the bottom of Glen Maye hill up a little lane to the house. Now the roof was only about as high as that off the ground ...

**DC** About four feet high.

**Mrs G** ... you could climb up onto the roof easy enough, you know. Anyway we got up there, there wasn't a soul about so we went round to the gable and there was a window in the gable of the house so we listened in there, the three of us, were listening in there. And the two women were in the house, Mrs Irving and Voirrey, and they were throwing what looked like an ordinary tin box and they were catching it, you know, to make a big bang, and then the other one was throwing it and she was catching it, and another big bang, and laughing, you know, making – having their own sort of fun, you know, anyway it all – the next salute we heard Mrs Irving singing 'Jerusalem the Golden,' it's a hymn.

**DC** Yes, I know it.

**Mrs G** Do you know it? Well, it must have been me, I think, that laughed out loud, and we heard Voirrey say, 'Hush, Mother, there's somebody at the door, there's somebody about.' So we three went straight away around, knocked at the door, 'We've come to see the Spook.' 'Oh, he's just been out.' 'Oh, has he?' 'Yes.' Now Willie Quirk's sister was the talker, she said, 'What was he doing?' 'He was singing 'Jerusalem the Golden.' Well, I was sitting up nearer the fire, it's a good job I was, and the other two girls were sitting further back, so we sat there and we sat and Mrs Irving was sitting in a rocking chair and she was pushing the rocking chair back and just touching the wall with it, and she was saying, 'There he is, he's about, he's about enough.' And this was three fools sitting there, you know. Then a bit later on she'd push her foot along the lino, 'He's still about, yes, he'll be out any time now.' Well we sat and we sat and he didn't come, so persuaded Voirrey if she'd go out, she was with us like, if she'd go out in the porch, maybe he'll come then, you know. But she went out, no nothing at all. So we were there for a good long time and then we got fed up and we said, 'Well, we'd better be going home.' 'Right.' So we set off down the lane and we were all walking single, because it's only a little narrow lane, you know, and one would shout, 'Did you see her moving her feet?' 'Yes I did.' 'Did you see her doing something else?' 'Yes, we did.' The next salute we heard 'Good evening,' and this was Mr Irving – he'd heard all the conversation.

- DC** Oh, right, he was following you, was he?
- Mrs G** He was coming home.
- DC** Oh, he was coming the other way.
- Mrs G** He was coming the other way and he must have been hearing all our shouting, you know, because we were shouting to each other, you know, all the way down, so that was left. So I said, well, that was proof enough that there was no such a thing, it was, proof.
- DC** People have told me that Voirrey used to throw her voice ...
- Mrs G** She could.
- DC** ... as, like a ventriloquist.
- Mrs G** She could, because I've heard her when she was going to school, throwing her voice up the field and shouting like a cat.
- DC** Really.
- Mrs G** Yes, and I know my cousin Anne said that she's been in the school yard and hearing voices coming out of the church, and she was terrified, yes.
- DC** After you left, after you'd both grown up and you know ...
- Mrs G** We were young.
- DC** ... did you get to know her, did you talk to Voirrey when she was left school at all.
- Mrs G** We didn't ask her about the Spook.
- DC** Why not?
- Mrs G** No, because she was supposed to be seeing this thing in the hedges, you see.

- DC** She believed in it, did she?
- Mrs G** She was telling us to believe in it.
- DC** She was telling you to believe in it, yes. So it was a big hoax, was it?
- Mrs G** Oh, an absolute hoax.
- DC** People have written books about it.
- Mrs G** I don't care, but that, that experience that we had, three girls of us, yes, and that was quite true.
- DC** And none of your school friends ever saw anything of an animal that would ...
- Mrs G** Oh, Lord, no, no, there was no such – there was no such a thing, no, no. I don't believe there was anything, there might have been a ferret about or a weasel or something like that, she might have seen that, you know, living up in the wilds up there, she could very well have seen a ferret or a weasel, yes, but there was no such a thing as a Spook, no.
- DC** Where did the Irvings come from?
- Mrs G** I don't know but Mrs Irving, especially, was very well educated, and very nice.
- DC** Why would they want to hoax people with a thing like that then?
- Mrs G** I do not know.
- DC** It was a big joke really then, was it?
- Mrs G** It was, and they had people coming from London and entertaining them down at the pub at Glen Maye, entertaining them for dinners and teas and things. Oh aye, they were doing well out of it, you know, yes, yes. But I don't know why. And oh, a good few years afterwards there was two or three men came, and they were staying at *The Ballacallin Hotel* and they were looking for the Spook. So I was telling them about it, you know, what I knew, they said, 'Do you know where she lives?' I said, 'No, I don't know where she lives at all,' but I knew

what town she was living in and I told them and they went and found her and she was awful mad.

**DC** Oh really.

**Mrs G** Yes, yes, she was awful mad that I'd ...

**DC** That you'd told them.

**Mrs G** That I'd put her on to them, yes.

**DC** So she has never wanted to talk about it since, has she?

**Mrs G** Oh, no, oh, no, but she's been coming over to my friends for years, yes, yes. And she had, this house, she went away, she had a sister away, and she went away to look after her, and I remember me father, a next door neighbour came to me father one night, he said, and it was a nice night, you know, 'Let's go and see can we see the Spook?' Me Mother said, 'Don't be such a fool.' My father said, 'Yes, he'd go.' So they went all the way up to the Spook's house, they knocked at the door, they said, 'We've come to see the Spook.' He said, Mr Irving said, 'Men, it's no use you coming on a nice fine night like this, you want to come when it's pouring with rain and black as can be, and then he's out.' And Mother said, 'Serve you blooming right!'

**DC** It was a long haul up to *Doarlish Cashen*, wasn't it?

**Mrs G** It was, and another night there was a feller called Clucas Crellin, he was from Peel, he, you won't remember them, they had a grocer's shop, Daley's grocer's shop in Peel, and this boy, he's from Onchan, and put a sheet on him, climbed up the back of the roof, I don't know what – oh, he was going to put a slate on the chimney, but he only got half way up the roof, Mr Irving came out, saw him, said, 'If you don't get down,' in I don't know how many minutes, 'You'll leave in a box!' My word he wasn't long taking down, never mind the sheet. No, he did not take long to get down, no.

**DC** Well, that was one of the games fellers, young lads played, as it, putting slates on top of chimneys, would it?

**Mrs G** I think it would be, yes, but Clucas was going to smook [smoke] them out, you know, whoever would be in the house he was going to put them out, yes, yes.

**DC** Including the Spook?

**Mrs G** Yes. But I've heard people say that they'd known that Voirrey and the mother would go upstairs, up to the bedrooms, and you'd hear all kinds of shouting and squeaking and carrying on up there, when the two of them was there, yes.

**DC** They were just having a bit of fun then, you reckon.

**Mrs G** Oh, that's all, yes, yes. There was never such a thing at all. And the next feller that came in the farm, he had a picture of a big, big ... I don't know what it was, a ferret or something, stretched along the gate, a dead thing. This was the Spook. But it was awful good fun, well it was really good fun, you know.

**DC** Let me take you back to when you were going to school and see if you can remember any of the poems of that time, do you think you can? What can you remember?

**Mrs G** I can remember 'The Slave's Dream,' was my favourite poem.

**DC** Was it – could you do it now?

**Mrs G** I think I can ...

*Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
His sickle in his hand;  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
Lay buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep  
He saw his native land.*

*Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
The lordly Niger flowed;  
Beneath the palm trees on the plain  
Once more a king he strode;  
And heard the tinkling caravans*

*Descend the mountain road.*

*He saw once more his dark-eyed queen  
Among her children stand;  
They clasped his neck., they kissed his cheek,  
They held him by the hand-  
A tear burst from the sleeper's lids  
And fell into the sand.*

*And then at furious speed he rode  
Along the Niger's banks;  
His bridle reins were golden chains,  
And with a marshal clank  
At each leap he could feel his scabbard of steel  
Smiting his stallion's flank*

*Before him, like a blood red flag,  
The bright flamingos flew;  
From morn till night he followed their flight,  
O'er plains where the tamarind grew,  
Till he saw the roofs of Caffre huts  
And the ocean rose to view.*

*He did not feel the driver's whip  
Or the burning heat of day  
For death had illumined the land of sleep  
And his lifeless body lay  
A worn out fetter, that the soul  
Had broken and thrown away*

I learnt that when I was a child going to school.

**DC** It's strange that for a child to learn, because there's nothing there that a Manx school child could really relate to, is there?

**Mrs G** No, no, no.

**DC** It was just the use of the words, I think.

**Mrs G** I don't know what it was but that was my favourite, my favourite poem, yes.

**DC** Did you learn a lot of poetry at school?

**Mrs G** Yes, I was very fond of poetry, yes.

**DC** Can you do another one, do you think, anything else.

**Mrs G** I'll tell you a queer thing that's happened to us, the other woman that's in this bed with me, we came to this room the same day, and on the windowsill there was a sparrow singing and whistling and whistling and whistling. And he was there for weeks, there. In the morning you'd hear him singing, in the evening you'd hear him singing, whistling away. A week last Sunday, the Sunday, not the Sunday gone by but the Sunday before that, I said a poem to him, and he buggered off.

**DC** And he's never been back?

**Mrs G** Never been seen since.

**DC** Oh.

**Mrs G** Now then ...

**DC** A sparrow that doesn't like poems, is it?

**Mrs G** Does not like poems.

**DC** How do you make that out then?

**Mrs G** I do not know, and it was a nice poem, a nice poem for him.

**DC** Was it?

**Mrs G** Yes, and he never came back.

**DC** Well, you wouldn't believe that, that's hard to believe really, isn't it?



**Mrs G** She'll tell you, the other woman will tell you, it's the honest truth.

**DC** It might be that he found somebody round the corner to feed him, of course.

**Mrs G** I don't, know. Oh, it was saying, what was I going to say? It was telling him:

*His mother keeps him warm, his father brings him food,  
And troubles you have none, happy little brood;  
Mind you do not fall from your nest on high,  
You've no feathers yet, so you cannot fly,  
But when your feathers grow, on a sunny day,  
You will learn to fly, then chirp chirp away.*

And he was gone – there now, you wouldn't believe it, would you?

**DC** It's amazing though, isn't it?

**Mrs G** Well, the first verse was:

*Sparrows in a nest, one and two and three,  
Under mother's breast, happy as can be.*

That was the first two lines, but where he went to, we do not know, but he's never came back, no, no.

**END OF INTERVIEW**