

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

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee(s): Mrs Betty Kelly and Miss McGinn

Date of birth: Mrs Betty Kelly: 20th November 1931

Place of birth: Mrs Betty Kelly: *The Golf Links Hotel*, Port Erin

Interviewer(s): Vi Richie

Recorded by: Vi Richie

Date recorded: 26th February 2006

Topic(s): Early school days
Interment camps in Port Erin
The Golf Links Hotel used as Nazi camp
Learning to speak German
Celebrating Christmas
Brother attending King Williams College
Grandfather’s farm and milk round
Brother playing truant and discipline
‘Big Brother’ Movement to Australia
Training as secretary in Liverpool
The Port Erin Bar and swimming
Entertainment and competitions
The ‘Herring’ man and fishing

Betty Kelly - Mrs K
Miss McGinn - Miss M
Vi Richie - VR

- VR** I'm recording the wartime memories of Betty Kelly K-E double L-Y on Sunday 26th February 2006. Can you tell me where and when you were born?
- Mrs K** I was born in Port Erin at *The Golf Links Hotel*, as it was then – it's now *The Princess Towers* – it's been rebuilt – on 20th November 1931.
- VR** And can you tell me your father's occupation?
- Mrs K** He was a marine engineer.
- VR** And which school did you attend?
- Mrs K** The Buchan School – I went to the Buchan School when I was five; and then I went away to school to Penrose College in Colwyn Bay when I was just fourteen, I think it would be. It was 1945 ...
- VR** Oh right.
- Mrs K** ... the end of 1945. So I can't remember very much before the war because, actually, in September 1939, I was seven, I would have been eight in that November ...
- VR** Right.
- Mrs K** ... and it was in 1940 ... I think early summer, when the aliens arrived to Port Erin; and they seemed to sort of come overnight, really, and as children, we went to school on the bus to Castletown, because I started there when I was five ...
- VR** Hmm, hmm.
- Mrs K** ... and, one day when we were coming home from school, I was with a friend, and the bus conductor said, 'You can't get into Port Erin without an identity card today, because all the barriers are up and all these Germans have arrived.' So of course, we were children, we were absolutely terrified and of course ...
- VR** Yes. (*laughter*)

Mrs K (*laughter*) ... there was so much going on and bombing everywhere, you know, you didn't know what was going to happen next. So the bus stopped at Ballachurry Corner – you know, at Ballafession, and we ... so we decided we'd get off and walk home via the golf links and get under any barbed wire that we thought we might encounter (*laughter*) and, of course, we had no idea, of course, at all. And there was a barrier ... I mean, they put them up practically overnight ...

VR Really?!

Mrs K ... the barracks, which is umm ... well, it's between Ballachurry and the Three Roads at Port Erin ...

VR Oh.

Mrs K ... and then the other barrier was on Zion Hill, or Honna Hill, I think – we always called it Zion Hill because the chapel was Zion Chapel that was on the hill at that time ...

VR Oh, right.

Mrs K ... and there was a barrier across there. So, of course, we thought we'd be seen by either ... (*laughter*) going across the golf course, so we had to dash in between gorse bushes and hope we weren't seen and shot at! (*laughter*) You know, as a child of sort of seven or eight – you'd expect the worst, yea.

VR So there was a sentry there at the barrier, was there?

Mrs K Yes, oh yes.

VR Local men?

Mrs K Oh, they were local men ... they all were local men.

VR Were they in uniform?

Mrs K I can't remember now ... they did have a uniform, but umm ... they were all men who were too old, really, to be called up, you see ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... so they did those sort of duties, or ARP [Air Raid Precautions] and that kind of thing.

VR Did they have a proper rifle?

Mrs K I can't remember that.

VR Don't remember ... I don't think they did, and they may have had them in the hut.

Mrs K They may have had them in the hut, yes.

VR They didn't present them to you?

Mrs K Actually, I remember when they did the re-enactment of the barrier, and of the ... I think it was 50 years or 55 years at the end of the war, and they set up a barrier along the main Port Erin Road.

VR Where would that be?

Mrs K Just outside what we used to call a repeater station, by the Methodist Chapel there.

VR Oh, right.

Mrs K That was where one of the main barriers was, latterly ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... because they changed them, you see, because originally Port St Mary was in it as well. And there were barrier at the Four Roads at that time, too.

VR Oh, I see. Why did they change them then?

Mrs K Because they reduced the numbers all the time, you see ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and, I mean, they started off at, I think, 4,000 in Port Erin.

VR Wow!

Mrs K I mean – it was an awful lot ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and I mean, every bed was full ...

VR Yes, must have been.

Mrs K ... I mean, in *The Golf Links* [Hotel], I think there were about 121, which was quite a lot for that, for that – I mean every double bed had two women in it ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... which must have been very difficult for them if they'd never met before.

VR Yes.

Mrs K I mean, circumstances were very difficult for them, you know, I mean ...

VR Better than where they were?

Mrs K Well, they were in England, of course, so they probably were ... were living better, you know, they were working in England in different fields when they were all rounded up.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K But I remember this, the re-enactment, you know, 50 years on, or whatever it was ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... and I didn't know this was happening; I drove along in the car, and I thought ... oh, and I went cold! It was really strange.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K It was as if you ... you were there!

VR Yes.

Mrs K Oh!

VR Re-living the actual ...

Mrs K Yes.

Miss M Like the air-raid sound ... used to do that, didn't you?

Mrs K Yea. Anyway, we managed to get home between the gorse bushes, safely, (*laughter*) and then after that, of course, we all got identity cards; and I can remember my identity card...

VR It had the photograph on ... didn't you?

Mrs K Oh, I think so, yea ... it was HZEE395.

VR Oh! (*laughter*)

Mrs K It's a pity we haven't identity cards today ... they don't re-use your old number!

VR At least you can remember it!

Mrs K Yes. Oh, and I can remember ... one of the main things was the convoys passing Port Erin Bay because they'd all go up from, I suppose, a lot of them would come from Liverpool, and they'd ... and also Bristol and London probably, they'd all have to come up that way to go out to the Atlantic, because they'd go up the North Channel ...

VR Right – you could see them quite clearly?

Mrs K Oh, you could see them very clearly. You would see them in Port St Mary as well, wouldn't you? But I remember them very distinctly in Port Erin.

VR Hmm – that would be some sight!

Mrs K Yes, it was, yea ... but we were umm ... we were designated a Nazi house, which ... actually, it was very difficult to start with, because they'd got everybody mixed up, and we had Jewesses and everything mixed. And so, of course, they did repatriate a lot of those very quickly. But I remember my mother being furious, because it wasn't long after they'd arrived, and one of them met her in the corridor and gave her a 'Heil Hitler' sign ...

VR Oh goodness! (*laughter*)

Mrs K ... and she said, 'Don't you ever use that sign in my house again!' (*laughter*)

VR Gosh!

Mrs K But you know ... anyway, some of them were really nice people, of course, and my mother and aunt sort of ran the place ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... and umm ...

Miss M You had a call, in the night, didn't you?

Mrs K Oh, they had a roll-call of course, twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, and when they were ... of course, my mother and aunt didn't know any German at all, and when they had to read out the names of course they couldn't pronounce half of them, and so one of the aliens, she was a very nice person called Regina Kennerling I remember, and she said, 'Would you like me to read out the names for you if you're there?' So they gladly accepted this offer. (*laughter*)

VR Yes. (*laughter*)

Mrs K But, actually she taught my aunt German.

VR Did she?

Mrs K Yes, and she got quite good. She used a book called, 'Heute Abend' [sp ???] and actually, when I went to Penrose, I did ... unfortunately I didn't learn German when they were there, but I did when I went to Penrose, and we were given that book, 'Heute Abend' [sp ???], and the teacher, she was a German called Miss Brandenburg, and she said, 'I can't understand why you've got such a good German accent.' (*laughter*) So of course, I mean, I'd lived with them most of the four years, so of course it was sort second nature for me to plug into it.

VR Yes.

Mrs K So I took German for my Higher School Certificate in the end.

VR Did you?

Mrs K Yea.

VR Oh.

Mrs K But I mean, unfortunately I didn't learn it when they were there. But umm....

VR Longer than you expected?

Mrs K Well, it was, and you know, at the age of eight, you don't exactly want to be learning foreign languages, and we didn't want to have much to do with anything that was German at the time.

VR No, not at all.

Mrs K You know it was a funny kind of time, really. So, but there were ... actually, they were the most wonderful dressmakers. And they could do anything with their hands. They could make anything out of practically nothing. And, I mean, they were very industrious. And, of course, you know, it was a long time to be ... every day in a ... to fill it, in the same sort of place and with people you'd never been with before; and they weren't allowed to stay in their bedrooms, you know, during the day. So they either went out or there were communal rooms.

But you see, there was no central heating then, so you can imagine what it was like in the winter, with the North Westerly gales coming in Port Erin. And I mean, some of those rooms, they were huge.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K On the ... where the turrets were of the hotels there, which was the design of them then ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and I mean, at that time they'd have two double beds in each of them, and there was still loads of room then.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K But I mean – you'd have five or six windows ...

Miss M Yes, great big windows.

Mrs K ... big windows, and they'd rattle, (*laughter*) and the draught was under ... and of course, the blackout was so important then, too. And they had to go and check the blackout religiously every night. Because they were frightened of them signalling out to U-boats or anything, you see? But I don't suppose they ever did, but you know ...

Miss M They could have ... hmm ... hmmm.

Mrs K They could have done, I suppose ... but what they could have signalled or told them? Goodness knows! (*laughter*)

VR Yes.

Mrs K But, you know, they didn't have very much material to make anything with, really, but, I remember my aunts – my great aunts lived next door at *The Snaefell*, because that was my great grandparents ... umm ... they took it in 1895, or something like that, and so my grandmother's two sisters were running it then, during the war ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... so of course they were full of ... but theirs wasn't a Nazi house in the same way.

VR Was the Nazi's house [unclear] off from the Jewesses ...

Mrs K Well, yes, well the Jewesses they mostly repatriated fairly quickly ...

VR I see, I see.

Mrs K I mean, they went through them systematically, you know ...

VR Right.

Mrs K ... but anybody who wanted, who wanted to go back to Germany, or who was a Nazi sympathiser, they kept them, you see, and they were there 'til the end of 1944 when they all went then, and they sent them back to Germany which, by those letters, you know, you had what they experienced when they got back there ...

VR It was pretty horrible.

Mrs K It was pretty horrible and they were wishing they were back here, really ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... which wasn't surprising.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K And of course they were very well fed here, too.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K And umm ... they had a rota every day that umm ... for the jobs they had to do. I think they had to work about three hours a day – something like that, they were supposed to.

VR In the hotel?

Mrs K In the hotel too – you know, they were cleaners ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... or somebody was doing the fires and somebody was cooking and ... you know ...

VR So they did their own cooking?

Mrs K Oh yes, they did their own cooking, and umm ... I think my mother had to supply the food and everything. They were paid a guinea a week for each internee ...

VR Right.

Mrs K ... and err ... they provided the coke and everything for the hot water and all that kind of thing.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K I mean, there were wash-basins in every bedroom, of course, but there was only, as it was in those days, there was only one bathroom for each floor! So you can imagine what that was like. *(laughter)*

VR Queues.

Mrs K Queues, yes. And umm ... oh, another thing they loved was Christmas ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and they made a great to-do about Christmas ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and umm ... we always provided a big tree, and they had that in the ballroom, and they made all presents for everybody ...

VR Did they?

Mrs K ... and even for us and my brother and I and my mother and aunt, we were all invited in for this Christmas and we were all presented with our presents. And, you know, they'd have candles and dim lighting and, you know, it was a really lovely time – I can remember it, and then they'd umm – oh, yes, then they'd sing carols round the tree – this was Christmas Eve of course, they made this great to-so on.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K And we had 'Stille Nacht' [Silent Night], of course. And I can't remember the others, but it was such a lovely atmosphere.

VR Yes.

Mrs K And then ... oh, I know, and then, the next thing was, between Christmas and New Year they used to have a party, and the one I remember most was, they did this Austrian knee slapping ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and they were all dressed up in their national costumes ...

VR National costumes.

Mrs K ... and some of them had been in *The White Horse Inn* Show that was in London ...

VR Oh, right.

Mrs K ... you know, when war broke out ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and so, of course you know, they knew it all, and it was such fun – sort of a happy time, really.

- VR** So they'd perform ...
- Mrs K** And they'd perform all this ...
- VR** Oh!
- Mrs K** ... you know, and then they'd have games and things like that afterwards.
- VR** Yes, yes.
- Mrs K** But it was really good, and that was ...
- VR** There'd be some talented ...
- Mrs K** Oh, there were, I mean, there were so many talented people amongst them, actually. They really were ...
- Miss M** What happened to the husbands and that? They came down to visit, didn't they? Every so often?
- Mrs K** Well, I don't remember that at all, because there were hardly any – well, I thought ...
- Miss M** See, we had men, and ...
- Mrs K** But you had a more mixed camp in Port St Mary which we didn't have ...
- Miss M** We did at first, yea, but they had to weed them out and put mostly men, I think they were, in the end, or all women – can't remember.
- Mrs K** Well, Port St Mary was closed down a lot earlier than Port Erin ...
- Miss M** Hmm.
- Mrs K** ... 'cos Port Erin went right through to the end.
- Miss M** Yes.

VR Did it?

Mrs K Yes. I think there were about a thousand finished up in the end, you know, whereas they started with four thousand, so it was a gradual process of elimination, really. But err ...

VR So you have some good memories, as well as ...?

Mrs K Oh yes, you know, and they used to go and help my grandfather on the farm at harvest time, and, you know, they really enjoyed that, and umm ...

VR Yes, I bet they did.

Mrs K A lot of them, of course, had come from small farms in Austria and different parts of Germany, so you know they were quite used to that kind of thing.

VR And they'd been working in the UK?

Mrs K Yea.

VR And then they were all ...

Mrs K And then they were all sort of rounded up. And they didn't know – that must have been so frightening! They didn't know where they were going. And I mean to be put on a boat, on a train and then a boat for four hours, and probably never even heard of the Isle of Man before – it must have been really hard.

VR Yes.

Mrs K And then, you see, they'd have to ... they got on the train at Douglas ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... you know, they'd have to walk from the boat to the train, then, and then they all had to go to St Catherine's Hall, I think, in Port Erin. And that's where they sifted them out and told them which boarding house they were to go to. I mean I ...

VR What an ordeal.

Mrs K It was an ordeal really.

VR Children as well, were there?

Mrs K Oh yea, there were children as well. Yea, I mean it was pretty hard, I think.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K Err ... I can't think what else would ... err ...

VR Did the children go to school?

Mrs K Yes, they had a school of their own, I think.

VR Did they?

Mrs K Yea, in Port Erin. They didn't go out to the local school, I don't think, at all, no.

Miss M They just had shopping days, open to the village, on shopping days here – at Port St Mary.

Mrs K Yes, it was – I remember them having sort of ... more or less ... they could go out to the village mostly. They could go on the beach, of course, all the time. Umm ... I mean, they had quite a lot of freedom when you think about it ...

Miss M Yes.

Mrs K ... you know, as to where they could go. I mean, it wasn't as if you were kept just in a hotel, and ... like the prisoners of war on Douglas Promenade ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... you know, and they just had a sort of walking area. I mean, I think it was – I think it was quite generous in that way.

VR Did the local people talk to them, or ... couldn't they?

Miss M Well, they weren't allowed to.

VR Oh, they weren't allowed to.

Mrs K Oh, I don't know ...

Miss M No. They weren't allowed to here, anyway, because ...

Mrs K Weren't you?

Miss M No, no they ... I mean, I ... my Uncle Tom, he came ... he was came, he was bombed out of Plymouth three times, and he came over, and he was only allowed in to the camp because, you know, being a relative, but he ... there was no – he wasn't to talk to anybody. And these Miss Duggans, who I tell you, they went to make friends with him, sitting on the fence reading, and he was very deaf, and came beetling in, and he said, 'Those Huns have been trying to talk to me,' (*laughter*) and 'Sarah,' he said, 'those Huns,' he said, 'have just been trying to talk to me.' She said, 'Those Huns are our next door neighbours!' (*laughter*)

Mrs K But actually, in a way, they were a God-send to the hotels and the boarding houses, because, in the First World War, umm ... they didn't have any business at all. And they didn't take – I don't think any visitors were ... came to the Island really, and so they were very poor.

VR Yes, yes.

Mrs K So it was quite a different kettle of fish ...

VR The Second World War ...

Mrs K The Second World War, it made a big difference. And in fact I'm sure my mother wouldn't have been able to afford to send Jimmy and I to boarding school if it hadn't been for that, because she felt it was not a very good atmosphere to bring up two children within a house with all these Nazis at our tender age ...

VR Yes, hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and so he was sent as a boarder to King Williams at seven and I went to the Buchan [School] at eight as a boarder.

VR Really?

Mrs K Yes, so, you know, I mean, that was ...

VR That was hard.

Mrs K It was quite young, really ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... and in the holidays, we spent a lot of the holidays with my grandparents at *Ballanarran*, which is on the Surby Road.

VR Oh.

Mrs K Out of the camp, you see ...

VR Oh, of course.

Mrs K ... and they had a small farm there ...

VR Did they?

Mrs K Yea.

VR Hmmm.

Mrs K And umm ... we really loved that, of course ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... but umm ... it was a funny kind of time, really.

VR It must have been hard for everybody.

Mrs K Yea, yes, to adjust it was. And umm ... as I was saying, you know, when Walter came home, before he went out to Africa, 'cos he was away for five years after this, he – I think he had a weekend's leave from Friday to the ... Monday he had to be back; and he came to the Four Roads and they wouldn't let him in ...

VR Oh!

Mrs K ... err ... to Port St Mary, they told him he had to go back to Douglas and get a special permit. And he said it was so ridiculous. And this is what they were doing with all the service men. And so I think he caused such a fuss about it, (*laughter*) they did something about it after that. Because, I mean, time was so precious ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... to have to go all the way – I mean, you had to go on the bus, of course ...

VR Of course.

Mrs K ... you see, so I mean, that was two hours and another hour probably getting your permit and everything else.

VR Yes.

Mrs K It was crazy!

VR And they'd have probably known the person, anyway!

Mrs K Oh yes! I mean, he said I knew them – grew up with them! (*laughter*)

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K But it was all this red tape, you see.

VR Yes.

Mrs K Yea. And people were feeling their way about everything really at that time, because it was so strange for everyone, really.

VR Yes, I know, queer situation.

Mrs K Yea, it was, it was a queer situation to be in.

VR Yes.

Mrs K But umm ...

Miss M The black-out was a great thing, wasn't it?

VR Yes.

Miss M We had lights in the ceiling ...

VR Oh dear.

Miss M ... difficult – they had to be made by a joiner ...

VR Hmm.

Mrs K ... hmmm ... but I was thinking about some of these stories about the aliens; they got themselves into some fixes. They had some terrible fights at times, too, between them.

VR Did they really?

Mrs K I remember one couple, they – my mother was horrified at this, because umm ... they had some terrible row, and the other got her by the hair, and swung her round the room, (*laughter*) ... and, I mean, the screams and everything were absolutely all over the house, and the ... you know, all sorts of things like that. Which, probably you know, it was frustration, and ...

VR Absolutely.

Mrs K ... you know, everything else and it ...

- VR** Closeness – too close.
- Mrs K** Yea, they were, you see.
- Miss M** Not knowing ...
- Mrs K** And then that woman, Steffi Graf, I showed you the picture of ...
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** ... with the cat ... she loved animals, and any sort of stray cat or anything she'd try and get it into her bedroom ...
- VR** Yes.
- Mrs K** ... and this time she got a hedgehog, (*laughter*) and she kept it in her bedroom. Well, of course, it only came out at night. And then it was running all round the place, of course it sounds like a rat! (*laughter*)...
- VR** Right.
- Mrs K** ... on the ... you know, on a lino floor, which it would be then ...
- VR** Hmm, hmm.
- Mrs K** And the people down below complained that there was a long-tail [rat] (*laughter*) upstairs! So I remember my mother having to sort that one out, too.
- VR** Yes.
- Mrs K** But, oh ... but some of them were really lovely, you know, and they became good friends, and, you know, they were very ...
- VR** They could speak English?
- Mrs K** Oh, their English – most of them – well, of course, before, you know, when they'd had four years of it (*laughter*) – they were very good with their English.

VR Yes, of course.

Mrs K And, I mean, I think that's how that woman, you know, the letter she sent back from Germany after she'd left, that she'd got that job with the American General, because her English was so good.

VR So good.

Mrs K Yes.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K So I think probably it helped them when they went back in many ways, because their English would be good.

VR Sure, yes.

Mrs K You know, with all the turmoil in Europe after that.

VR Hmm, what they'd gone back to was not great.

Mrs K Yes, oh, it was a shambles, wasn't it?

VR Hmm.

Mrs K Yea. But I remember – my mother and aunt, they had a friend, Louis de Hain [sp ???], who was a French master at King Williams – he'd been there since the twenties, I think he went there after the First World War – and he used to – was great at having cocktail parties, and so they used to go to his cocktail parties, which he had at King Williams in his study. And so, now and again they'd invite him for dinner. And what a performance to get a man into the camp! *(laughter)*

VR Oh!

Mrs K I mean, they had to let them know weeks in advance he was coming, all details of him, when and where and how long he was staying, who he was – I mean, it was unbelievable. And I mean, well, I thought he was an old man then,

(*laughter*) but I mean ... I don't think he would have been much harm to any of them. But I remember that quite well.

Miss M Well they had a hospital, didn't they?

Mrs K Hmm.

Miss M At Port Erin.

VR Yes – I can't remember where the hospital was.

Miss M Hmm ... Dame Johanna Cruickshank ...

Mrs K Cruickshank – she – well, she was the – I think she was the Commandant at one time.

Miss M 'Cos we had a man commandant ...

Mrs K And then Mr Cuthbert came.

Miss M He was here ...

Mrs K Yea. But they had the umm ... some of the Fifth Column people were in Port Erin, too. I think they were at *The Imperial*, you know, Mary Kay's place, some of the Fifth Columnists.

VR Were they?

Mrs K Yea. I don't know whether she mentioned that in her tape or not. Umm ... but I think they were.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K But umm ...

VR I don't think she did.

Mrs K She didn't? No, well, we had an old Manx lady called Alice, who came from

Ronague, and she worked in the laundry, because we had a laundry, which was at the back of the hotel, and it was our own laundry, so had a washer-woman and somebody who did the ironing and things for all the laundry – this was before the war. And also we had an engine house, because we had to generate our own electricity ...

VR Right.

Mrs K ... until it came under the mains and she, for some reason, she was there all during the war, as well. I don't know whether she used to help my mother in some ways, or whether they did the laundry for the internees or not, I'm not sure. Umm ... but she used to walk down and get the bus from Ronague every day, and she lived in a little cottage, sort of just one room cottage sort of thing, up at Ronague, near the chapel there, you know, Ronague Chapel. And she was real old fashioned Manx, and she had a ... she had an illegitimate son, Walter, and he was a lovely boy, and I remember he came and he worked in the kitchen, actually, at *The Golf Links* [Hotel] before the war ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... as a sort of kitchen porter ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and then, of course, he was called up, because he was only 18, I think, and so he was called up. And he went out to Burma, and he was killed out there.

VR Oh.

Mrs K I mean, it was so sad, because she must have had such a struggle to bring him up ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and then for that to happened. I mean, she was heartbroken, you know, it was very hard.

VR Hmmm.

- Mrs K** But, you know, there were so many stories like that really ...
- VR** Yes.
- Mrs K** ... but umm ... of course, we used to have to bicycle everywhere ...
- VR** Hmm, hmm.
- Mrs K** ... and umm ... you know, as children, of course, we thought it was wonderful, and we used to go on our bicycles all over the place. Colby Glen was the great place for a picnic.
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** We were always losing shoes and goodness knows what at Colby Glen (*laughter*) – much to my mother's chagrin!
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** But it was a good time, really, in many ways.
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** And the countryside was so lovely then. You know, I don't know whether it's sort of halcyon days of youth that you think of.
- VR** A bit of both, probably.
- Mrs K** Probably, yea ... but umm ... and the farm was so different then, with all the cows – in fact, my grandfather got the first TT [Tuberculin-Tested] tested cow in the Isle of Man, especially for me when I was born.
- VR** Oh, really?!
- Mrs K** And of course, I mean, it would be frowned on today to use one cow for one child, (*laughter*) wouldn't it?
- VR** Yes! (*laughter*)

- Mrs K** But it was. So that was 1931 ...
- VR** Yes.
- Mrs K** ... so that was very special, so, because they weren't all TT [Tuberculin-Tested] tested by any means.
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** No, most of them weren't.
- Miss M** I think Walker's were one of the first to have a full herd tested.
- Mrs K** To have a full herd, yea.
- Miss M** *Ayrshire's*, theirs, weren't they?
- Mrs K** Yes, I think this was a *Friesian* that he had.
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** But I loved going up there and the cowman – oh, he was a chap called John Quilliam, and he was the cowman and the horseman was Amos Collister. And my grandfather had these two, and of course they were in umm ... I don't know, you know, they didn't have to be called up because they were farm workers.
- VR** Yes, yes.
- Mrs K** I forget the name they called them.
- VR** Some kind of occupation, wasn't it?
- Mrs K** Yes it was, yea ... and umm ... John had a little van and he used to go round with the milk in this little van. I don't know how he had a – how could he do that when it was rationed? I don't know. Anyway, he seemed to have this ...
- VR** I don't think milk was rationed.

- Mrs K** No, I don't know, but the petrol for the van ...
- VR** Oh, yes.
- Mrs K** ... unless they had a special allowance for that.
- VR** Yes.
- Mrs K** They may have had for farmers, probably.
- VR** Hmm.
- Mrs K** And John Quilliam – he became a great Manx scholar in the end.
- Miss M** Oh yes!
- VR** Oh really, did he?!
- Mrs K** And he's written several booklets and things about umm ... but he was a great storyteller.
- VR** Was he?
- Mrs K** Oh yes. He taught me how to milk. And I've got it in an autograph book that he wrote, 'Betty's first milking lessons in 1942.' (*laughter*) And I don't know why he didn't draw cows – he drew four pigs (*laughter*) in this thing!
- Miss M** Perhaps he couldn't draw cows.
- Mrs K** No. But my brother, he went to umm ... the Four Roads School, and umm ... Wilfred Kelly was Headmaster still then. He was a very strict headmaster, but he was very good ...
- Miss M** Very fair, hmm.
- Mrs K** ... and my brother and a friend of his decided to play truant, and we were staying up with my grandparents then, but John was on his milk round and saw them. And they hopped over the hedge when they saw him coming, into the

churchyard, *(laughter)* so he had to go and chase them round the churchyard, dragged them back to my grandfather, and one of them was ... one of Gandy boys ...

Miss M Oh yes!

Mrs K ... Reggie Gandy, *(laughter)* and anyway, Reggie actually had a hard time because their mother died when they were very young, and the father had to bring them up, and they lived in a cottage up at Surby, and they were a very nice family, but ... anyway, Reggie was marched back to school by John, and Wilfred Kelly gave him a good basting; but Jimmy had to go and face my grandfather who beat him *(laughter)* until he broke a stick ... stick on him – my mother nearly had a fit! And so my mother had to yank him back to school, took him front of Wilfred Kelly, so Wilfred Kelly said, ‘I can see that he’s been seen to already, I won’t give him any more.’ And so he never played truant again. *(laughter)*

Mrs K Oh dear!

VR He learnt his lesson!

Mrs K He did learn his lesson, yea. But umm ... Jimmy had to – he emigrated to Australia in 1949, it would be. Because of course – he went to college, to King Williams until he was 17 and then, of course, there was no work in the Isle of Man, and he wasn’t academically particularly bright, so, you know, he wasn’t sort of university material or anything. And actually he would have been an excellent joiner, but my mother thought it was, ‘in for a dig’ probably, to go in for joinery. So umm ... anyway, he opted to join this ‘Big Brother’ movement, which was a £10 passage that they ... the Australian government sponsored after the war ...

VR Right.

Mrs K ... to get young English boys to go out to Australia, and the ‘Big Brother’ was supposed to be an Australian of some sort of standing who would vouch for the little brother, you see, who was Jimmy ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... so he went off on this. And of course, when he got there, he was put – the Australian government gave a lot of land after the war – bush it was – to servicemen, you know, who'd come back ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and they wanted to farm and so they gave them this land. And so Jimmy was put on a bush farm with this, and I mean, they were just clearing bush, really. They weren't sort of farming as such. And his 'Big Brother' was an architect in Sydney, but he didn't seem to come up to scratch or take much interest in him at all. So, anyway, he seemed to be alright, but he was such a bad letter writer, my mother used to go ...

VR Mad?

Mrs K Oh, bananas, because she'd hardly ever hear from him – maybe once every six months or something. And, you know, he was only young – he was 17 when he went ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and umm ... anyway, the next thing was, I got married in 1953, so he came home to give me away ...

Miss M He did, yes.

Mrs K ... and umm ... also to help my mother with the business, because, of course, I'd been helping her up until then. Because, actually, after I left school, and I was going to go, and I'd booked already to go to *The Alliance Française*, which was attached to the Sorbonne, to the language school there, and Louis de Hain [sp ???] actually had fixed all this up for me. Anyway, my aunt, who was at that time, in her forties, suddenly decided to get married, and she only met him – I think he was a visitor – she met him in about the June, and she was getting married in the September ...

VR Oh!

Mrs K ... and I was leaving school in the July, and so, of course, I thought, well I can't

leave my mother with all that ...

VR No.

Mrs K ... so I gave up the idea of that.

VR Ah ... going to the Sorbonne?

Mrs K And umm ... so I then went to Miss Sykes's secretarial college in Liverpool, in Rodney Street, and I did my secretarial training there so that I could come home ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and help my mother.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K Anyway, I'm digressing a bit, because I'm trying to explain how Jimmy came to come home to help my mother then.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K But he didn't really like it at all. It wasn't for him. And he'd been used to the wide open spaces, and I remember him coming to Walter one day and asking Walter what should he do? You know, he felt he ought to stay and help her. And Walter said, 'Well, what do you really want to do?' So he said, 'Well I only want to go back to Australia.' So Walter said, 'Well, you'd better go.' Because he was only 22 or 23 then ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and so he did, and he didn't come back for 35 years.

VR Oh, wow!

Mrs K Yea. He came home once in 1990.

VR Yea.

Mrs K So he just died this last summer.

VR Oh!

Mrs K We were in contact quite a lot latterly.

VR Were you?

Mrs K You know, but he was a hopeless ... correspondent – dreadful.

VR Right.

Miss M Phone was better for him, wasn't it?

Mrs K The phone was much better for him, (*laughter*) when he got into that.

VR Yes.

Mrs K But you know, we were very close, really, and umm ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... but, you see, there was no work here in the 1950s at all. And that's why so many people had to emigrate ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... I mean, my uncle, he emigrated, really, he went to King Williams – he went to the grammar school, the old grammar school, you know, the old Grammar School in Castletown ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and then King Williams, then he got an exhibition to Peterhouse in Cambridge ...

- VR** Oh, wow!
- Mrs K** ... and from there, he went to India. And he went there in the twenties and he became quite a sort of 'name' in the end. And umm ... you know, but I mean, he had to emigrate – there was nothing for him here, really.
- VR** Yes.
- Mrs K** So ...
- VR** Shame, wasn't it?
- Mrs K** It was really, because it was a terrific 'brain-drain' in a way. Which, I suppose, it still goes on today.
- VR** Hmm, hmm ... it certainly has a lot coming in.
- Miss M** Yes, a lot.
- Mrs K** A lot's coming in now, and there is something to say for it.
- Miss M** There wasn't the financial side, there wasn't the finance then was there?
- Mrs K** There was nothing in that line, at all, no. I mean, even Will qualified as a lawyer, there were hardly any lawyers.
- VR** No.
- Mrs K** No – I mean, that's only thirty years ago. You know, I mean that if you ...
- VR** Still had to go off Island.
- Mrs K** Well, he ... he went to Cambridge and did law there ...
- VR** Hmm.

Mrs K ... and then – you know, did his three years – and then he came back and was articled at Kelly Luft's which is what Henry did, too ...

VR Oh!

Mrs K ... for his ... but ... for his accountancy.

VR Oh!

Mrs K He went to Cambridge and then he did his training with Pannell's. And then after that he went – well he went – oh, he went to Liberia and all sorts of funny places. (*laughter*)

VR Hmm.

Mrs K New York and Paris and ...

VR Is that so?!

Mrs K Yes, so ...

VR Seen a bit of the world, then?

Mrs K Yea. But Manx people really did – they had to.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K You know, to ...

VR Yea.

Mrs K ... to get any work, really.

VR It's not [unclear], they had to – spread their wings.

Mrs K Yea, they did, yea. But umm ... we had a lot of fun actually when we were children, because *The Port Erin Bar*, you know that wreck of a place now – that was hive of fun ...

VR Was it?

Mrs K ... and every Wednesday they had a swimming gala, and they'd have all these competitions between the different [school] Houses and everything. And they had greasy poles, and huge diving boards and ...

Miss M Bucter [sp ???] Ball.

Mrs K Oh, and they had the big Bucter [sp ???] Ball – that was before the war.

Miss M Bucter [sp ???] Ball – that you could climb ...

Mrs K And you could climb in the middle ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and then you'd get diving for plates, and things like that ...

VR Oh!

Mrs K ... and they used to have a beauty competition as well. And I remember going in for the swimming once, and I ...

Miss M Collinson's Cafe was a big draw for them, too.

Mrs K Yes.

Miss M Just above ...

Mrs K That's right.

Miss M Go for ice-cream.

Mrs K But Tessie O'Shea, she came to judge them all (*laughter*) one time, and I – I won a teaspoon!

VR You won, did you?!

Mrs K I – this was some swimming thing, it was, it wasn't a beauty thing, I can tell you. But (*laughter*) ...

VR Why not?!

Mrs K Well Shelia went in for the beauty contest once. But they had to walk all along the outer wall – you know where the sea comes over?

VR Yes.

Mrs K All along there. I mean ... there's not much between you and the sea!

VR No, nothing!

Mrs K But people didn't think anything of that.

Miss M Sitting round those little paths.

Mrs K Yes, all the seats were cut out of the tiers – have you ever noticed them there?

Miss M Yes, cut out, hmm.

Mrs K And they'd be absolutely packed with people watching them!

VR Really?

Mrs K Oh yes! Because of the people from all the hotels would come and cheer them on, you see.

VR Yes.

Miss M They had competitions, didn't they, between the hotels?

Mrs K Yes, oh, they did, oh yea ... and then Collinson's, which is that round building ...

VR Oh?

- Mrs K** ... you know, overlooking Bradda Glen.
- Miss M** With a dance floor.
- Mrs K** That was a great place for tea-dancing. And there's a beautiful sprung floor ...
- VR** So I've heard.
- Mrs K** ... in that room, yea.
- Miss M** Peach ... what was its name? Peach Melba.
- Mrs K** Oh yes, they did lovely tea-dances and ice-creams and things like that. But that was before the war, really, it didn't do much after the war.
- VR** Hmm, hmm.
- Mrs K** But all the hotels had dances.
- VR** Did they?
- Mrs K** Yea. I mean, we had a ballroom, *Snaefell* had a ballroom.
- VR** Oh, right.
- Mrs K** They did at *The Bay View*, which is now *The Royal*, and they did at *The Ocean Castle*, which was then *The Hydro* ...
- VR** Right.
- Mrs K** ... they all had ballrooms. And dances, you know, two or three times a week, yea.
- Miss M** Port St Mary was ... the only one was *The Bay Queen*.
- Mrs K** *The Bay Queen* had dances four nights a week, yes.
- Miss M** And fancy dress.

Mrs K And fancy dress.

VR Oh?

Mrs K Every Thursday night.

VR Great!

Mrs K Had to go in and give the prizes.

VR *(laughter)* Did you?!

Miss M Concert on Sunday.

Mrs K Oh yes, there was always a concert on a Sunday night, and that was for charity ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... and they had ...

VR For local people?

Mrs K Well, the visitors themselves ...

VR Oh, I see.

Mrs K ... they would contribute. And some of them were very talented.

Miss M Oh yes, there was that wonderful singer – what was her name?

Mrs K Oh, Gladys ... hmm, I don't know. Anyway, there were one or two very good opera singers came, you know, as visitors, and pianists and that.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K And we had a local pianist who used to come every Sunday in case there wasn't anybody, you know, but usually there ... I mean, out of three hundred people

you usually find somebody.

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K And then they used to have community singing as well, you see ...

VR Oh, right.

Mrs K ... which they loved, of course.

VR Yes, yes.

Miss M Open the doors and dance along the balcony.

Mrs K Oh that was when the dance was on – they did the ‘Hokey Pokey’ round the balconies and that. (*laughter*)

VR Yes.

Mrs K Yes, it was ... it was a different world, though.

VR Yes.

Mrs K Absolutely! I mean, you can’t imagine it today when you look at Port St Mary.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K The beach was absolutely packed – yea!

VR And now you never see hardly a soul.

Mrs K No, no. And midnight bathing and everything, but it’s ...

VR There’s lots to learn.

Mrs K Oh, yea. My husband was very keen that they should all be very ... in bed by midnight, (*laughter*) and not sort of keeping the whole Port up. And we would ...

Miss M The staff would go down after midnight, and he'd haul them out, and tell them to get back to their ...

Mrs K Yes, he used to shout to them from the bedroom window, (*laughter*) because we were, you know, we had ... we lived in *Chapel Bay House*, which was then *The Moorings* – it's only latterly changed the name ...

VR Oh, I see.

Mrs K ... and umm ... he used to shout out the bedroom window when it was after midnight, (*laughter*) but we had no licence, you see there, at all!

VR No.

Mrs K And umm ... actually a lot of young people came ...

End of side 1

Mrs K ... and umm ... actually a lot of young people came because they – the parents knew ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... that they would be well looked after and everything ...

VR Yes.

Mrs K ... and that they couldn't get into ...

VR Any trouble.

Mrs K ... any trouble.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K And of course, my father-in-law was very strict. They were teetotal – very teetotal and umm ... you know, they kept a rick on things.

VR Yes.

Mrs K But it was quite different from today, I must say.

VR Goodness, yes.

Mrs K Yea. And there was something organised every day, there, for the visitors, you know, to do. They could do it if they wanted to, and didn't, if they didn't. But, you know, there were tennis tournaments, there was bowls, there was – well, there was a swimming gala, then they had pitch and putt up at – by the station, you know. Then we had a cafe there as well ...

VR Oh!

Mrs K You know – where you could go and get drinks and things like that, if you were playing tennis ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... or pitch and putt or whatever. And then, every Sunday ...

Miss M Bicycles.

Mrs K That was a Wednesday – there was a bicycle ride to Rushen Abbey ...

Miss M Across the water.

Mrs K ... and they always went through the ford there. (*laughter*) And then, you see, you could have ... there was tea-dancing in there as well, you see, at that time ...

VR Yes, yes.

Mrs K ... so they used to have a dance there. And umm ... then they'd cycle back.

VR Cycle back.

Mrs K Yea. And the chap who was in charge of the entertainments, he used to go ahead of them, and in his car, often (*laughter*) and all these bicycles would be

trailing behind, because there was a chap on the promenade who kept a bicycle shop especially for the bikes for *The Bay Queen* and for anybody to hire during the week as well. And then, on Sunday, this chap, Fred Hoyle, he took them all on a walk round by the Chasms, to the Sound ...

VR Oh, right.

Mrs K ... and then there would be a coach picking them up at the Sound. And that was the Sunday morning walk. And so there were all sorts of things like that.

VR Well organised, then ...

Mrs K Oh yea.

VR ... entertainment.

Mrs K Oh, it was. And then there was a ... Mellor's coaches, he had a ... it's where the *Port of Call* is now. He had a garage there, and he had a couple of coaches, didn't he ...

Miss M Hmm.

Mrs K ... or Charas [charabancs], as we called them.

Miss M Took them to the shows in Douglas...

Mrs K Yes, took them to the shows, and the mystery tours, and they went anywhere, you know, they wanted to go they went.

VR Oh, wonderful!

Mrs K Yes. So, you know there was a lot going on.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K So, but ... certainly times change, don't they?

VR They do.

Mrs K Yea. But oh, then I haven't told you about the – I want to tell you about the herring. (*laughter*)

VR Oh yes ... yes, go on then.

Mrs K Yes, because I thought that was so nice, when I ... when I think about it, because it was a picture that I had as this memory from – well, it must have been before the war when I was a child, and you had to have a little rest after lunch, you see ...

VR Hmm, hmm.

Mrs K ... so I'd be probably, maybe two or three, I suppose, but I can't remember anything other than that when you think about it. And I remember lying in bed, and the sun was streaming through the curtains and I was wishing I was out there, and you could hear this chap with this herring cart, shouting, 'Fresh herring, fresh herring.' (*laughter*) And he'd go up and down the lanes, all along the back of the hotels, you see, and people would come out, you know, from the hotels and get their herring for breakfast next morning ...

VR Yes, of course.

Mrs K ... because they always served fresh herring and kippers and bacon and egg, and everything you could think of, you know, for breakfast.

VR Good whole food.

Mrs K Yea. And umm ... but the herring cart, it was such a sort of part of life.

Miss M It was so many – how many for a shilling?

Mrs K Oh, I don't know how for a shilling, it was just ...

Miss M Huge amount.

Mrs K Yea.

Miss M A great amount.

Mrs K And then you'd hear the gulls, as well, you know, course they'd follow him, probably.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K But he ... you know, I suppose he'd pick them up in the morning from the boats.

VR Yea, fresh caught.

Mrs K Fresh caught, yea.

VR Yea – wonderful!

Mrs K Yea. So, it's a long time ago.

VR It is.

Mrs K Yea.

VR Well it's scarce now, apparently.

Mrs K They are, you see, because they've, you know, the spawning bed, you know, that Alan Bowers found off the East coast; well, they must have sort of just used these big trawlers or something on them ...

Miss M Well, they had those big Russians fish ...

Mrs K ... and trawled them all out – I don't know!

Miss M Those – they had factory ships that they used to go to, so they didn't have to go back – they'd go to the factory ship and deposit the load there, then go back fishing again, so they were never off the sea.

Mrs K Yea.

Miss M A lot of them.

Mrs K Yea. Well, it was the staple diet, really, I mean, you – when you see them in the

shops, half of them are not big enough, anyway, or else they're the Norwegian ones which don't taste the same at all, as the little Manx ones – they were as sweet as anything.

VR Hmm.

Mrs K Yea.

Miss M Very good for you.

Mrs K Hmm.

VR Well, Miss McGinn and Mrs Kelly, I'd like to thank you very much for sharing your memories with me. This interview will be a great asset to the Manx archives and to the research being carried ... undertaken there. So thank you both once again, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW