

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

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee: Mr John Alfred ‘Jackie’ Kneen

Date of birth: 25th August 1931

Place of birth:

Interviewer: David Callister

Recorded by: David Callister

Date recorded: 27th July 2000

Topic(s): *Cornflower Coaches*
Round the Island Tours
First *Austin* coach in the Island
Competition from rival coach companies
Coach Companies and their liveries
TT course and *Rushen Abbey* coach trips
Working for Mannin Tourers
Wages and tips
Breakdowns and repairs to coaches
Decline of tourism
Fatal accident involving two women
Seamen’s strike
Working for Jack Edmonds

Jackie Kneen - Mr K
David Callister - DC

DC Well, I've just got you as Jackie Kneen, and I see its J. A. Kneen out on the doorplate, there, now let me guess, it's either Albert or Arthur, that's as far as I can go.

Mr K It's John Alfred.

DC Alfred, oh, right, John Alfred Kneen. Do you want to give me your date of birth?

Mr K 25th August '31.

DC Okay, well, you've just got four years on me, that's all, or thereabouts. Okay, so we're going to talk about coaches. I suppose it would nice just to go back a bit to your father's time because your father, being in the coach business, had, what were they called, his coaches?

Mr K Well, they used to be, they were all different names then. He drove the coach, one was called *The Renown* and one was called *The Invincible*, and they were *Daimlers*, and that was in the 1920s.

DC What sort of, would they have solid tyres back then?

Mr K Yes, solid tyres and he drove one, had the first blown up tyres, which, every time he turned a corner, he used to nip the tubes, a puncture.

DC Oh, really.

Mr K Yes, and then he took it off the blown-up tyres and put it back on the solids.

DC Really. But it must have been pretty rough going round the Island on solid tyres, was it?

Mr K Yes, they were – and when the first pneumatic tyres come in, they were just starting to tarmac the roads and he had to leave these overalls in the road with the tar, when he was changing the wheels, and when he come back there was the *Pirelli* fellow, was at the office, and he said, 'Just the guy I want.' He gave me a new pair of overalls and so that's – they sorted that out and they put the coach back on solids for the rest of the summer and then they mended all – they

found out what was causing nipping the tubes and they went back on the thing tyres again.

DC So, to just get the relationship between your father and T. H. Kneen's, the other coach operators?

Mr K Well, T. H. Kneen, in the old days, up to 1937, was James Herbert Kneen and Thomas Howard Kneen, that was the – they were in partnership and then Grandfather died in '37 and my father didn't get his whack out of it and he went on his own.

DC What did he call his coaches?

Mr K *The Cornflower.*

DC *Cornflower*, yes. And now, your father then, in fact died quite early in life, didn't he?

Mr K My father was called James Wilkinson Kneen, which, he died on 11th August 1950.

DC And he was a relatively young man then, was he?

Mr K Yes, he was only 51.

DC But I mean you will have memories of being with him on his coaches, not driving necessarily?

Mr K I was too young to drive but I used to go around the houses touting for people to fill the coaches.

DC Oh, you had to go around the houses?

Mr K Yes.

DC What, you'd knock on the doors?

Mr K I used to go around into the dining rooms at fifteen years of age, and I used to load three coaches up around Murray's Road and Farrant [Street] – Hutchinson Square. I used to go round after I finished work at night, at teatime.

DC When you say touting for business, what did you do when you got into the dining rooms?

Mr K Well, you'd go into the dining room and you'll just say, well, 'I'm the – just called to see is anybody interested in coach tours,' and, 'we have a coach this morning, one going around the Island, that's a full day tour, which starts at 10 o'clock and you're back at 5, back in time for tea.' And then, 'We have an evening tour, one on the Mystery Tour and one Rushen Abbey, or another one going to Glen Helen, and is there anybody like to go?' and I'll take the bookings and we'll call up here at quarter past six for you, or whatever time it was.

DC Oh, right, so you picked them up from the hotels?

Mr K From the hotels, from the houses.

DC And how many hotels would you try and cover on this run to get customers then?

Mr K Well, you tried to get quite a bit. That's if the people were still in the dining rooms, because some of them – because I was serving my time as a painter and I didn't finish work till half past five, and I had ...

DC So it was a quick rush round, was it?

Mr K A quick rush round.

DC You'd get to about a dozen or so?

Mr K Out on my bike, push bike, around Murray's Road and that, and then used to pick the people up and then if we were short any, we used to go down to the promenade, because my father would be parked with the other – one of the coaches down on the stand, opposite the ...

DC *Crescent?*

- Mr K** ... *Crescent*, well no, opposite *Hazelwood* and *Empress*.
- DC** Oh, over there, right.
- Mr K** It was on that stand. And then there used to be four coaches on each stand and then the taxis were behind it.
- DC** So he'd be, what would be trying to fill one coach, or what?
- Mr K** He'd be – they used to have a rota, you'd be No. 1 today, and then there would be some other firm would be 2, 3, and 4. And then the next day you could be No. 6, but you had to – when them coaches moved you brought the spare in, which some days you might not be on the stand. And that was all done through the Corporation then, it used to be, the inspector was Bert Clucas.
- DC** Well, this was the late 1940s then, wasn't it?
- Mr K** Yes, from '45 onwards, yes.
- DC** Now, what sort of coach would that be then, in those days, one of those – what I call the older coach.
- Mr K** Well, the coaches in 1945 and '46, they were only the pre-war ones, from 19 – some of them could be early '30s, and up to 1939 coaches.
- DC** How many would they seat, those?
- Mr K** Well, between 20 and 26, but the first 29-seater come to the Island in 1946, but she didn't have 29 seats in her, she only had 26, because the licence was only for 26-seaters. And that was called *The Margaret Rose*, which was owned by Wilfie Purvis, and it was sold at the back end of the summer, like he only had a month or two out of it, sold at the back end of the summer in A. E. Corkill's yard, in Finch Road, by public auction, and the price of a new coach then was about £1700, and it was sold in public auction to T. H. Kneen, which was £2700.
- DC** Really?

- Mr K** Yes, because you couldn't get them.
- DC** Oh, of course. Now, we're looking at a painting here in your living room, of a coach and in front of that is one of the signs saying, 'Round the Island Tour' for 12/6d.
- Mr K** Yes, 12/6d.
- DC** And is that the sort of coach we're talking about really, is it?
- Mr K** Well, that's the coach, the *Austin*, the first *Austin* on the Isle of Man, which was, it come here in August 1948 but it didn't do – it didn't go on the road until the November because it come in August and my father said, well, it's not worth putting it on the road until – I'll run it in, in the winter time because it only had 400 mile on the clock. So he run it in himself that way.
- DC** So you'd be very proud of that new bus then, I suppose.
- Mr K** Yes, she only had 28 seats but she had lots of room in it, she was more like a 30-seater but she only had 28 seats in.
- DC** So this, was that livery sort of blue and white, was it?
- Mr K** Blue and cream ...
- DC** Blue and cream, yes.
- Mr K** ... with a map on it, on the crest was a map of the Isle of Man and an orange band and it had *Cornflower* coaches wrote on it.
- DC** Oh, *Cornflower* coaches. Who will have painted the coach itself, then?
- Mr K** I did.
- DC** Did you – as an apprentice – or you were out of your apprenticeship, perhaps then?

Mr K No, I was still in apprenticeship, yes, and we used to paint them in the winter time.

DC So, that was a specialist job that really, wasn't it?

Mr K No, you used to just paint them by brush.

DC What was a coach like that like inside for comfort then?

Mr K She was quite nice, she had *Dunlopillo* seats and that, she was real comfortable, that one. But they were only, those old coaches, 29-seaters and that, and they were only 7 foot 6 wide. Now the coaches now are 8 foot 6.

DC So there was a bit of a narrow squeeze then.

Mr K Yes, you've just that extra space.

DC Did they have a roof that opened in any way, did it?

Mr K Yes, they had sliding roofs, like you used to slide them open.

DC How tough was that as a job, because it would be manual, was it?

Mr K Oh, they were just a slide, they were quite easy, as long as you kept the runners greased, like. And you used to lock them, pull a catch on them, lock them.

DC Where did you get your fuel, your petrol?

Mr K Well, we had our own tank, we used to be garaged in Demesne Road there, opposite Creer's, the builders, yard, the garage is knocked down now and it's only, they sell second hand cars in there now, but it was next door to Finch Hill Garage.

DC Was petrol still on the ration in '47, '48? It probably would have been, I suppose, would it?

Mr K No, I think it just come off but we used to get the petrol from Kirkpatrick's,

which was Manx Petroleums then.

DC Yes. And how many miles to a gallon would you get out of a coach of that 1948 style then?

Mr K Well, that one, that one there would be doing about 12 mile to the gallon, that one. The Austin was a bit lighter on petrol than the Bedford.

DC Did they have speed limits on the Island for coaches then?

Mr K They were 30 mile an hour speed limit. But, I mean to say, you used to drive, well, about, if you got her up to between 30 and 40 that's all you could get really out of them. And coming up the mountain there, you'd be down into second, which would be only doing about 10 mile an hour, coming up the mountain with them, because it would be screaming away.

DC This would be then, just after the war, people coming back from the industrial towns in the north of England mostly, the visitors, presumably, would they?

Mr K Yes, it was all these holiday Wakes, like Oldham and Bury and all them, they used to have their certain weeks and the busiest time was the last two weeks in July – that was your busiest time.

DC But it was cut throat competition, was it, with all the coaches, I mean there was a whole stack of them, wasn't there?

Mr K Yes, oh, aye, yes.

DC Who were all the others then?

Mr K Well, there was T. H. Kneen's, there was Shimmin's, The Crescent, there was *The Pride of Mona*, there was A & E Clague's, Esplanade, there was McMullin's, there was the Huntsman, there was Tasker's, Cowle's, Kenison, *The Highlander*, *The Rambler*, Kennish's, that's ...

DC Yes, so there was certainly ...

Mr K Osborn's, the Queen of the Road.

DC And a bit of business for them all then?

Mr K Well, you used to, business on them, so, you used to, if you didn't have enough to go around the Island you used to give them to one of the other coaches, or something and watch – some of them what they do, like, if they did have only 10 each, they would say, 'Right-o, we'll toss up, right, have half the fares,' one would say, half-fares. So he would go with – you could, my father would toss up and say, 'Right, ten each,' and that would give us five fares. And that's the way they used to do.

DC Were the drivers then, in those days, like, just employed for the summer time, paid a weekly wage, were they?

Mr K Yes, yes, only summer drivers. Some of them, like, were tradesmen, or they used to drive wagons and that.

DC And in the summer time, certainly later on, some of the school teachers used to take coaches, didn't they?

Mr K Yes, there was one of our drivers was, Kermode, was his name, he was a school teacher and he lived in Bournemouth and he used to come over here.

DC Oh, right, but some of the local school teachers would spend the summer holidays on them, wouldn't they?

Mr K Yes, yes.

DC When did you start driving the coaches yourself then?

Mr K 1954, for Kay's Motors, Alec Kneen.

DC Because by this time your father had passed on, the business had been sold off.

Mr K Yes, passed on, sold off, all by – my brother and I had a taxi, and we were working the taxi and then 1952 I went in the Forces, National Service, now when I come out I was – went back to my trade and then there was not much doing in the trade and I started driving a coach for Alec Kneen in 1954.

DC So '54 we were still getting good numbers of visitors, weren't we?

Mr K Yes, yes.

DC Were there still as many coaches on the road then?

Mr K Yes, oh, aye, there were, they were still there.

DC Can you remember the sort of – the livery that each one had?

Mr K The one I had was like a maroon and cream, it was called the Gale's Motors, and he had, Alec had four coaches, one a 26-seater *Bedford* and he had a *Dodge* 25-seater and another *Dodge*, which we called the spaceship – she was a 22-seater.

DC Yes, but they were all pretty distinctive in their colours then?

Mr K Yes, they were all in the colours, there was McMullin's, *The Mayflower*, that was red and cream, Tasker's, they were like a bluey green colour, Shimmin, *The Crescent*, were yellow. *Pride of Mona* was red and cream, who else? *Rambler* was like a greeny colour, it had another colour besides that one, and there was Corlett's, in Peel Road, they were a greeny colour, or something.

DC Would they have been painted up before they came to the Island or was the coach painted here then at that time?

Mr K Well, some of the coaches, some of the coaches were already painted coming here but just after the war some of them were coming in just the ordinary primer coat.

DC Can you remember the first time you took a coach out?

Mr K I drove a 29-seater, GMN 669.

DC Amazing memory – where did you go?

Mr K Well, you used to go round the Island and that, I started in 1954, Whitsun, and

then you used to do the Round the Island, afternoon tours or evening tours, and when it come to TT week then you'd be down at the boats on the race mornings, doing a trip around the TT course before the race started.

DC Before the race started?

Mr K Before the race started, and Senior Race Day I done four laps around the course before 9 o'clock in the morning.

DC You're kidding!

Mr K No.

DC What, taking different groups?

Mr K Taking different groups from the boats. Started off about half past four in the morning. We slept down at the boat the night before and then all the – the first boat would be in and you'd be touting, there'd be a load of coaches all round Victoria Pier and round, Walpole Avenue and that, and touting there.

DC So people were coming off the boats with their baggage and everything ...

Mr K Day trippers.

DC Oh, they were day trippers mostly.

Mr K Day trippers, and you'd be taking them round the course and you'd be dropping them off on different parts on the course, like on the mountain. And the coach I drove, we had to stop down on the quay at Ramsey, I used to have to fill her up with water and oil and we were back over the mountain, it was pouring with rain and misty, and I was doing an hour and a half a lap.

DC Yes, an hour and a half was it, you'd manage.

Mr K And that's with a stop at Ramsey and stopping on the way.

DC How did you attract the customers by this time then, were they still going round the hotels and trying to get ...

Mr K Yes, I was still working the hotels and that, and then, no, you'd be – we were – had a booking office there at the – up by *Castle Mona*, by Dowty's little – by Keig's shop there, in Castle Drive, there.

DC So moving on from 1948-9 into the early '50s, had the price gone up from 12/6d for Round the Island?

Mr K Well, no, the price come down.

DC Oh, had it?

Mr K Yes, because there so much competition, it used to be 10 shillings, including lunch, because there was so much ...

DC That's 50 pence today, yes – including lunch?

Mr K Including lunch, some of them were.

DC Where were the best places to go for the lunch then?

Mr K Well, we used to go to John Kinvig's, which is, used to be *The City Restaurant* in Peel, which now, I think, is called *The Harbour Lights*. Marie Quirk's, in thing, and then there was *Grainger's*, all that. They were all the ones that were in Peel at that time.

DC Oh, yes. Was *Rushen Abbey* still on the run?

Mr K Oh, yes, oh, aye, used to call at *Rushen Abbey* and get your cup of tea, mug of tea, and that.

DC No strawberries and cream for you?

Mr K Oh, no, no, jam sandwich.

DC And, I mean, most of the places that they still go to, presumably, today, will have been on your runs as well, wouldn't they, I suppose.

Mr K Yes, usually go to *Rushen Abbey* and then you'd go, if you were going south about, *Rushen Abbey* first thing and then you would go to Port Erin, and then make your way then from Port Erin up to Peel, either go up through the Ballamodha or up over the Sloc, and that way, or Colby and up that way, to thing – but mostly up Ballamodha with the old coaches. Then Peel for dinner and then to Ramsey and then you used to either come home the coast road or up over the mountain.

DC So did you have to do this bit about the history of the Isle of Man thing when you went round?

Mr K Yes, you used to just tell them the main things, like the Nunnery Castle, and owned by the Taubmans, Goldie-Taubmans, and just down *Rushen Abbey*, which used to belong to Furness Abbey, and just tell them something about Castle Rushen – just brief.

DC What did you tell them about the Fairy Bridge?

Mr K Oh, you just, well, if you don't say good morning or whatever time of the day, they'll all come and kick you out of bed at night. I get kicked out by a big fairy every night.

DC What about punctures, now, I've been on coaches all over the place and they never seem to get punctures, where they bad for that, or not?

Mr K No, I never had a puncture on any of the 29s like, it was only later on I had one in one of the 40 ones, but that was a back wheel one, but ...

DC How do you replace, how do you fix a puncture on a coach then, it must be quite a job, isn't it?

Mr K Well, when I worked for Mannin Tourers, well, if you had a puncture you used to – you had your jack with you, that, or you used to ring in and they used to come out, the mechanic used to come out to you. But if you had a puncture in one of your back tyres, in the back, well, they were twin wheels, and one wheel would carry ...

DC Get you home on one?

- Mr K** Yes, come home that way.
- DC** What, I mean, the tourists, holidaymakers, as we used to call them, they would all have been quite well behaved, I suppose, but did you ever have any trouble with any of them?
- Mr K** No, we didn't have any trouble, not on the coaches, no.
- DC** Were they good for tips then?
- Mr K** Well, they weren't very – well, there used to be threepences and sixpences and that, and an odd bob, in them days, like, it would be before decimalisation come in, so it used to range 15, about 15 bob to a quid or something like that.
- DC** On a trip?
- Mr K** On a trip, if you were lucky and sometimes you might not get – nothing.
- DC** But out of a week you'd do pretty well then, wouldn't you?
- Mr K** Well, it all depends, sometimes you'd get, what we used to call them, 'march pasts' – nothing.
- DC** That happened to you, did it?
- Mr K** Oh, aye, a few times there was ...
- DC** So they wouldn't, I mean the people that were coming over on these holidays would be, what mostly from the north of England I suppose, would they?
- Mr K** Yes.
- DC** Factory workers and that sort of thing?
- Mr K** Yes, there'd be only north of England and that until I was working with Tours and then they'd come a little bit ...

- DC** They'd be on what we call a tight budget now, I suppose, would they?
- Mr K** Yes, yes, they were just mill workers and that.
- DC** What did you – were you – you kept all the tips, the drivers then, did they?
- Mr K** Yes, yes.
- DC** But the pay wouldn't be too brilliant, would it?
- Mr K** No, you were, you'd be on, 1954, you'd be on about £10 a week, that was seven days a week.
- DC** Yes, for all those hours.
- Mr K** Yes.
- DC** You just had to put the hours in, there was no overtime?
- Mr K** Yes, and if you did go out on the night run with a bus you used to get one fare, so if it's a 'Mystery Tour' which was five shillings, *Rushen Abbey* or *Glen Helen*, four shillings, and that's all you used to get.
- DC** What, I mean, with a 'Mystery Tour' then, you could – it was left to yourself, was it?
- Mr K** Yes, up to the driver, yes.
- DC** The drivers must have had favourite places to go, were they getting a bit of money from the hotels or the restaurants, for bringing parties in, do you think?
- Mr K** Well, you used to get your dinner if you went round the Island, you used to get your dinner in Peel, or something, and you might get a couple of bob off them, yes, and that was it.
- DC** Pound notes weren't flashing about then?

Mr K No, no, no. I think the dinners in Peel were only about five shillings or something like that in them days.

DC Yes, of course. Did you ever have any breakdowns?

Mr K I didn't have – no – only a couple of breakdowns, like a fan belt broke going up Injebreck, and ...

DC Was that something you'd get out and fix yourself, was it?

Mr K Well, the coach I was driving didn't have any water in it, it had a liquid in the radiator, which was called *4Life*, and it used to only get up to a certain temperature and it wouldn't boil.

DC Yes, I remember that, yes, *4Life*.

Mr K So I was – Tours only had one coach and the one I had, all the fours, that's the one that was testing it, but it was bad to find the leaks in the heating system, that liquid, it was just like a brake fluid, type of thing, red and, but luckily enough when I was going up Injebreck, when the fan belt went, there was another coach coming up behind, so he took some of my passengers and I got up over the top and then we went right down to Kirk Michael, phoned up and Michael Garrett, the mechanic, come out with another bus and we swopped over.

DC Swopped the people into that.

Mr K Swopped over and he brought a fan belt and fixed it and took the other one back. And then when I got back home at tea time, I took my own bus again.

DC Did you enjoy those years driving coaches?

Mr K Yes, they were quite nice like, it was a change from doing the trade or that.

DC And how long did you keep on driving then, I mean you started in '54, did you?

Mr K Well, I was on '54 and then 1954, after the summer, I went on a wagon, worked on a wagon, for Alec Kneen, and then work was very tight then so you got

whatever job was about, and I drove – I went and got a job in Quirk’s Bakery, driving the van, delivery van, so I done six years on that and in my spare time I would be either taking a coach or driving my brother’s taxi.

DC What would be the last time you drove a coach, would you say?

Mr K The last time, when I finished the coach was, full time driving, was ’67 for Jack Edmonds and then I was only part time after that till 1980 when Bert Corkill died.

DC So you’ve seen the decline, then, of tourism, really through those years, haven’t you?

Mr K Yes, yes.

DC I mean how do you remember that now, all those wonderful years in the ‘40s, with all those hordes of people up and down the promenade, dwindling away then?

Mr K Yes, there’s all the small houses, up around Murray’s Road, Farrant Street and Christian Road, they all just started to drop down in visitors, you don’t see any visitors, they were mostly all on the promenade, and then you used to get a lot of – when I worked for Mannin Tourers, you used to get a lot of tour people, which included tours, which – they were – there was no English coaches coming over here then, it was only one, it was Sheffield United, that was the only English coach, all the rest was all done, local coaches.

DC So really, sort of, one by one, you saw all these coach companies disappear out of business, did you?

Mr K Yes, well, when I worked for Mannin Tourers, I was six years there, he started to buy up some of the firms like Creer Callister’s, out of St. George’s Street, he bought Neville Clague’s Broadway Coaches, and who else did he buy, oh, he bought Ransome’s, Teddy Ransome’s, and then when – he was going to take Hamill’s over but something happened there and they went with Corkill’s, and then I think, who was it now, what year was it, late ‘70s, when Corkill’s and the railway, like Manderson and all them, they bought Jack Edmonds out and called it Tours, so they had some of the old road service buses and that, like the

Bristols and some of the *Leylands*.

DC Now, have you ever had any trouble with the police, Jackie?

Mr K No, no, it's only a warning, that's all, when I was parked by *The Hydro hotel*, on a Sunday morning, loading passengers for the airport, so one of the passengers come into the hotel and said, 'Jackie,' there's a policeman outside.' His bike in front and he was at the back waiting for me. And so he said, 'You're parked on a pedestrian crossing.' I said, 'I know I am, but,' I said, 'how can I get a 30-foot bus to pick these people up at this hotel which is on a corner. If I park at the other side of the road I'm on a bus stop, and if I park across the road the people would have to go across on the pedestrian crossing to get in the coach, I would have to go back and forward with all the cases, so,' I said, 'just you tell me how I can get a 30-foot bus on this hotel, loading, there's *Little Switzerland* going up, so how can I be blocking that so ...' – all I got was a warning. And I said, 'I'll be here every Sunday morning, so ...' I said, 'you tell me how to get a bus in.'

DC You never saw him again.

Mr K No, no.

DC So you were driving, or at least when you first spotted a coach over here they were, what, 26-seaters, weren't they?

Mr K Yes, they were, *Bedfords* or *Dodges*.

DC And they've gradually gone up. What will a coach hold today, 50 plus, won't it?

Mr K About 52, yes, 52, 54.

DC Just imagine the bosses in those days if they could have got 52 people in, instead of 29, they would have been rubbing their hands, wouldn't they, really?

Mr K Yes, yes.

DC 12/6d a time.

Mr K Yes, that's it.

DC Do you reckon they made a lot of money out of coaches, the owners?

Mr K Well, they made a living out of them, like.

DC More than a living, or not?

Mr K Well, if they kept going, like, some of the firms used to do well, like, and others, they just expecting on what they picked up on the stand, like. But some of them had the good connections, like some of them had tours, which – my father had Dean and Dawson's, and he had Cook's Tours, which, they were stopping in either *Castle Mona*, *The Metropole* or *The Good Companions*.

DC So it was a good thing to get hold of a tour and you would have them, a contract really, would you?

Mr K Yes, you would, what you would do, they were all, like, coming through Chapman's, Chapman's at that time and you used to have to get the list and the name of the people and you used to go over on a Saturday night or Sunday morning and see had they arrived and tell them when they go out, what day they go round the Island and then a half day tour or an evening tour.

DC Were you driving when the seamen's strike was on?

Mr K Yes, I was driving for Mannin Tourers.

DC What happened then?

Mr K Well, they used to just get the passengers which was always coming in by air and there was no boats, no cargo, anything, and Jack Edmonds, who had Mannin Tourers, he engaged an aircraft called *The Hibernia*, which was an Irish one, a *Dakota*, and I had to go away to Liverpool in the night, load – the plane was – all the seats were taken out of it, and there was only me in it and the crew, the two pilots, and we'd fly to Liverpool, load up with cargo, foodstuff and come back the next morning. Go and get a wash and shave, breakfast and then take a coach round the Island.

DC Oh, yes, so there were still a few people to get in the coach then?

Mr K Yes, well there used to – at that time there was the Cambrian Airways were flying and it would be – or the Dan Airways and all them, Silver City, they were coming from Blackpool, or you'd get these others. You seemed to get a better class of people which was coming by air, and not by the boat, like.

DC Better tips?

Mr K Aye, it was okay. And then on the Friday, you would go away on the plane again, which the seats were back in the aircraft, and you'd be loading – it was cycle week and you'd be loading up with passengers and they were going through Cambrian Airways in Liverpool and I was away sorting all them out, getting their tickets and money out for them to fly back to the Island, and come in the afternoon, it was an American pilot, and he says, 'You want to go home, Jackie?' I said, 'Yes, but,' I said, 'you haven't got any seats left in the aircraft.' So he said, 'Well, do you want to go home?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Well, sit on that step at the door,' and I come home from Liverpool sitting on the step of the *Dakota*.

DC Really, yes.

Mr K So that was in 1964, '66, I should say.

DC Were coaches much involved with accidents in the Isle of Man?

Mr K No, not very much, only I had one serious accident with the coach. It was Cycle Week and it was 21st June and just started to rain at tea time and I was due on the booking office down at *The Crescent*, for to go out on an evening run and I just said to the wife there, 'I'm not, I don't want to go out tonight,' because it was the daughter's birthday, she was only seven, so I said, 'I wasn't in a hurry.' So all the boys down at the booking office said, 'Where's Jackie Kneen? He should be down here now, he's due on the booking office stand, it's his turn to be on,' and there was no sign of me. So, as I was going down Ballaquayle Road I saw two ladies walking up the – up on the pavement – with the umbrellas up and then when I got round about, oh, I'd just passed Duke's Road and I was just going down, slow ...

DC In the coach?

Mr K ... in the coach, we were in third gear, and they stepped off the kerb, walked across the road, I braked but when I hit them with the front of the coach, and then the coach like seemed to skid and it pushed them, it didn't – it pushed them and knocked them over, like boomeranged and went down. One was about 6 foot in front of the bus and the other one was a bit further down the road. And how the bus skidded, it – with the wet, where the buses used to turn, the Corporation used to turn round into York Road and it must have been a bit of diesel, and with the rain the bus just slid and it didn't go over them, it just – one was killed, the one that was further away, she was killed, and then the other one died later on in hospital, in Noble's.

DC And they hadn't looked to see that you were there?

Mr K No, they were deaf and dumb and they had cataracts, bad eyes, and they had umbrellas up, and they were going to go to the chemist's shop and what come in their mind, instead of carrying straight on up the road to the chemist's shop, they decided to cross the road and go to York Road and that's when I hit them.

DC That must have been a shocking experience for you, though?

Mr K Yes, so I stopped the coach and got out and it was raining and I just got my mac and I just put it over them, like and didn't touch them, like, just put the mac to keep the wet off them, like. And there was nobody around, I didn't see anybody around, so – and then somebody come around and they phoned for the police and that and I just went in and just switched the engine off, knocked her into gear, and then there was one – Stuart Slack's father – come around and he just – I was just talking to him and I never realised he was my witness, he was coming out of Waverley Terrace and that so he just said, next day in Court, that I couldn't do anything because they just walked out in front of me, so it was accidental death, like, and that.

DC There'd have to be an inquest afterwards, was there?

Mr K Yes, yes, so that was – and it was nothing – it wasn't me to blame at all.

DC No, no. Did it put you off for a while then, or – how does that affect you?

Mr K No, no, I was back on the coach the next day.

DC Were you?

Mr K Well, my brother come around, Jimmy, and he took me around soon after the accident, he took me around the block in the car to get my nerve back again. But I had to take another coach the next day around the Island, and that, and that was '67, so I carried on all that summer, like, and then come to August and that, and Jack Edmonds were gunning for some of these summer drivers coming in too early, so I just come in my normal time, around about 10, and I think Jack had been drinking a bit and he was – he just said to me, 'If you can't be in here at the same time as the others there, I'll get somebody to drive the bus at night.' I said, 'Oh, well, it's like that then,' I said, 'right, you can get somebody drive it all the time.' So then I just packed up that Monday night and I left and Willie Kneen and them were saying, 'Oh, don't bother, don't bother, he's been drinking, leave him alone,' so I said, 'no, no.' I think what it was I'd just had enough, like, with that accident so ...

DC You worked for Jack Edmonds for quite a while, though, didn't you?

Mr K Six years.

DC He was, I suppose you could say he was an entrepreneur, wasn't he?

Mr K He was a very good business man, he could get the business but Billy Callister, which was over in the garage like, and used to be down in the booking office, he used to sort out the loads and that, and Jack Edmonds could go and get the business, he could go up to the Queen and get her to go on a coach tour, but when he got it, the business, he wanted somebody else to sort it out.

DC Right, yes, yes. Did Jack Edmonds, because we mentioned before about getting tours in from the UK, Jack organised quite a few of those, did he?

Mr K Yes, Jack Edmonds had quite a few tours, he had Southdown's, he had Northern General's, he had Bee Lines.

DC And this wasn't bringing coaches from England over here?

Mr K No, these were just passengers, which were brought to the Isle of Man by boat or by air.

DC Right, they make their own way here, did they?

Mr K No, their own coaches from across, their own tour people would drive them up to Liverpool or wherever they were flying from, and then we would meet them when they'd get off the boats.

END OF INTERVIEW