

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

‘TIME TO REMEMBER’

Interviewee(s): Mr Edgar Quine OBE

Date of birth: 16th August 1934

Place of birth:

Interviewer(s): David Callister

Recorded by: David Callister

Date recorded: 29th November 2004

Topic(s): Early childhood memories
Father was well-known TT cyclist
School days and discipline
Food and catching rabbits
Lack of hygiene handling foodstuffs
The *Thie Veg* [outside toilet]
Pocket money from catching long tails [rats]
Joining Hong Kong Police Force
Dealing with riots and getting shot
The *Star Ferry* riot
Red Guards movement
Promotions and transfer to Commercial Crime Unit
Influx of Vietnamese refugees into Hong Kong
Auxiliary Police Band wearing Manx tartan
Sir Douglas Clague

Edgar Quine - Mr Q
David Callister - DC

DC Another in our series of programmes examining Island life in the 20th century. The voice of today's guest will be familiar to listeners who take an interest in Manx politics. He was a Member of Tynwald for some 17 years, often regarded as a thorn in the flesh of four administrations over that period. He's Edgar Quine – Richard Edgar Quine, to give him his full name, born on 16th August 1934 at *Ballacrebbin* in Andreas. But he joins me, not to talk politics or even about his distinguished career in the Hong Kong Police. In this half hour we hear about some of his escapades during his youth. Shortly after he retired from the House of Keys last year I went to talk to him at his home in Sulby and I asked him what kind of memories he had of his early days.

Mr Q Very fond ones, really. I mean, I'm very much – I'm a country lad, you know, I was born and brought up in the country, my parents and grandparents were from Andreas and Smeale, and obviously, it goes without saying that my – I started out prior to the Second World War somewhat, so I have recollections of life as it was before the Second World War, and life as it was coming through the Second World War with the rationing and blackouts and all that sort of thing.

DC What do you remember of your grandparents and your parents?

Mr Q Well, on both sides, on my grandmother's side, and my grandfather, in fact, they were essentially crofters. They were crofters, my grandmother on my father's side was out at *Ballacale*, out at the Gob Goramoore [sp ???] – I think now we tend to refer to it as 'Blue Point.' And my – on my mother's side, of course, they were crofting down at Gat-e-Whing, which is in the Smeale area. So I, you know, I spent a lot of time with them. We used to go out and spend time with them and, of course, we were totally absorbed with all the things that went on around us there.

DC Your father was quite athletic, wasn't he, from the pictures I'm seeing here of him with his bicycle?

Mr Q Yes, father was athletic. I don't think – I've not inherited very much of that, David, I'm afraid, (*laughter*) I'm a kind of an armchair sportsman. But my father was a well-known cyclist, and he, in fact, won the Isle of Man cycling TT in 1926 and 1928, and as you saw, we've got two grand cups here, which are solid silver cups, presented by the *Dunlop* Company. And, so cycling in those days, you had to be really, really had to be extremely fit, because, of course, you

didn't have all the modern bicycles. And getting round the TT, 'cos it was a TT course based race,

DC How many laps would that be? Just the one?

Mr Q It'd just be the one lap.

DC Yes.

Mr Q But, I mean, my father worked on the farms, and I remember him explaining to me, you know, just what the total set-up was. I mean, he was working on a farm at Bride, on the race day he would work until eleven o'clock in the morning, before the farmer would let him off ...

DC Right.

Mr Q ... then he would, he would then cycle into Ramsey, put his bicycle on the train, go up to Douglas, then do the race round the TT course, and then, in the evening, after the presentations, they would, the lads would have a drink and they would cycle all the way back to the North of the Island. And on – I think it was the first year that he won – it would be 1926, I remember explaining to us that he cycled into Ramsey, missed the train, cycled over the mountain and then did the TT race and then cycled back again in the evening. Now if that's not dedication to your sport, I don't know what is.

DC Well, presumably he had good training working on farms, then, did he?

Mr Q Oh yes, he spent, if you – he was really a farm-worker – well, he was a farm-worker for most of his life.

DC Like a hired farm-worker?

Mr Q Absolutely – a hired farm-worker. I mean, in later years, when the number of people working on the farms dwindled a bit, he had a spell when he used to walk the Highway Board stallion. He used to walk from farm to farm around the Island with the Highway Board stallion. He had a number of years when he worked on the threshing mill – Crennell's Mills. But essentially he was a farmer. And, of course, if you – and I might add, a ploughman, and that is

where you get your fitness. If you were going to walk behind a horse and plough all day, it was excellent training for to be a cyclist.

DC *(laughter)* Right. Where were you born yourself, then?

Mr Q Well I was born in *Ballacrebbin* when my father was working in Ballacrebbin. *Ballacrebbin*, of course, is a – you won't know – is down in Andreas. But of course, at that time, farm workers were hired and fired – you know – as part of the Hollentide Fair, and so you moved from farm to farm. So I was born in, as I say, *Ballacrebbin*, then of course, I – following father, moved along, and we all moved with him, I went to *Ballawhane*, and from *Ballawhane* to *Balladoole*, *Ballacorey*, *Ballakilley*, *Ballavair*, *Ballavarry* – and so we went on, almost year by year we moved from farm to farm.

DC Up to what age would that be?

Mr Q Well, all the moves that I've just mentioned, were completed before I was eleven. They were completed before I was eleven.

DC Did you find it all confusing or did it not matter or what? *(laughter)*

Mr Q It was, it was nothing out of the usual. I'd never known anything else. But in latter years, when I've sat through debates and heard people talking about how important it is for children to have a stable background and not to interrupt their education, I have reflected that perhaps it's surprising that I got as far as I did, because I certainly – I had excellent parents, they were very committed to us, but, I mean, the social circumstances were such that there was no way that I had a stable background. We were forever on the move, changing schools, changing Sunday schools, changing homes and my mother was the most expert decorator – you can just imagine – the number of houses and rooms that she's decorated, it was fantastic!

DC *(laughter)* Yes. Were you using pen and ink?

Mr Q Oh no. Pen and ink was for those – for the older students. When I started at the Dhoor [School] we used to get a bit of slate and a piece of chalk – slate and a piece of chalk. And I was just telling some kiddies recently when I visited Auldyn School, and they thought this was quite hilarious, ... ummm we get a

slate and a piece of chalk, because I think the idea was then young children – it wasn't sensible for them to waste paper, so we got this bit of chalk. And I remember for PT [Physical Training] too, at the Dhoor School, we used to get a little rattan mat, which would be about, oh, eighteen inches wide at the most, and maybe three foot long, and we'd do our PT – we used put this little rattan mat down on the floor and do somersaults and our exercises lying on it, and that was the substitute gym.

DC *(laughter)* Oh right.

Mr Q We had gasmasks, there were drills for that. We used to get, of course, cod liver oil and we would get out picking rosehips for the war effort.

DC Yea.

Mr Q I mean, the cod liver oil we used to get, of course, we'd all get lined up and get a spoonful of cod liver oil, and unless you were first in the queue, I'm afraid the spoon that you got your cod liver oil on was the same spoon that most of the others got their cod liver oil from. *(laughter)* But it didn't seem to make any difference to us anyway.

DC *(laughter)* There was – I mean, hygiene was quite different in those days, wasn't it?

Mr Q Oh, oh absolutely. I mean ...

DC I mean, even in the home and so on.

Mr Q Well, if you take, if you take sort of a home, I mean, we would be – oh, I'm just trying to think about the years, but it would be in the late 1940s before we had water, piped water in any house that we lived in, and certainly a little later than that before we had electricity. And, again, I recollect, we lived in a thatched cottage, it was *Ohio Cottage*, down in Andreas, and my great grandmother used to live with us at that time, and I remember this vividly, we had a local preacher come in to visit her, and, of course, as was always the case, everybody must have a cup of tea, but the water, of course, was kept in this earthenware jar – big earthenware jar out in the back, on earthen floors – there was no boards in this cottage – and we all had a cup of tea. Mother had gone out and she had filled up

the kettle, taken the water from this earthenware jar, into the kettle, boiled the kettle, and we all sat down to have a tea and biscuit and that was fine – everybody had a cup of tea and a biscuit and it went down great. Anyway, the teapot subsequently became empty, and mother grabbed the kettle to see if there was a need to replenish – you know, to replenish the tea pot – and, low and behold, although there was obviously water in the kettle, no water would come out of the kettle. The lid was removed, and inside the kettle, well-cooked, was a mouse. *(laughter)*

DC *(laughter)* Oh dear!

Mr Q And I can assure you, any sort of thought of anybody having a second cup of tea of that, it disappeared fast!

DC When you went to these various schools, then, presumably it was the three ‘Rs’ you were learning – basic education?

Mr Q Yes, not much more than that. Obviously they covered geography and history, but it was founded on the three ‘Rs’. There was, there had been very little change in the syllabus, I think, from my father’s time. But I mean, the approach to it, or at least the approach I experienced, in part that’s probably because I was one that needed to be driven a little, was that the teachers used to say, ‘Well, I’m going to teach you, even if I have to sort of half-kill you to get you there!’ And they were really strict.

DC Yes.

Mr Q And I remember at Andreas, we had a lovely little teacher called Miss Sayle, who had taught my father. And she would walk up and down the classroom looking over our shoulder while we were doing our lessons. And if we had a mistake, which was more often than not, she used to grab you by the short hairs above the ear, and give them a severe tug, *(laughter)* kind of a form of torture, and you know, this went on so frequently, really, that we were almost bald above the ear where she used to grab us hair and give it a tug, *(laughter)* but as we got used to this, and as we grew taller, of course, the secret was to get up on your feet when she was getting a grip on the hair at the side of your ear, so as you look the leverage off, and it wasn’t quite as painful.

DC You're listening to 'Time to Remember' on Manx Radio and today I'm talking to Edgar Quine. Not about politics or police matters, but about his rural beginnings as the son of a farm worker. Life in the country when Edgar was growing up was a lot more basic than it is today.

Mr Q I was fifteen years old, and had left school before the National Health Service came in, so I mean I went through my childhood without the support of the National Health Service. The Health Service as we know it today didn't exist. But, you know, people got by. I mean, life in the country, of course was, in many ways, compared to today, would be rough and ready. I mean, people would be using – very rarely would be – they tried to avoid, should we say, using coal and the cost of coal. I mean, they would be using gorse bones as we would call them, and logs for fires ...

DC Yea.

Mr Q ... and again, I've got fond memory of visiting a friend of my father's when I was a little lad and he used to cut gorse bones off until they were about four foot long, three foot-four foot long, and he would shove them up the chimney and they would burn their way down. *(laughter)* And this used to amuse me no end. And again, you'd be sitting there at night and when it come to sort of supper time as you'd call it, he'd go out to the back kitchen and he'd get himself a couple of salt herring – they'd not been soaked in water – and today we've all these dire warnings about not taking too much salt – he would get his salt herring, he would put it onto a bit of twisted wire that he had, and he would toast the herring, toast the herring over the fire. And I remember this particular night, he was sitting there toasting the herring, and he had the old cat sitting on his lap, and when the herring was done to a turn, as we would say, he brought it back, and he was about to remove the herring from this toasting rack that he had, but the old cat was quicker than he was *(laughter)* and the cat sprang, grabbed the herring and was just about to leave his knee when he grabbed the cat by the tail. And I have this picture of the cat with the herring in its mouth, our friend with the cat's tail, and he was sort of whacking the cat round the head to make the cat drop the herring, *(laughter)* ultimately of course, the cat dropped the herring, he picked it up – it had lost nothing and he carried on with his supper! *(laughter)*

DC Yea, well this – the herring was a vital part of existence, really, wasn't it?

Mr Q Oh yes, I mean, herring, herring were very important. I don't know how many herrings I've eaten in my life. And, of course, rabbits and woodpigeons and things like that. I mean, rabbit was a very important part of the diet as well. You could always get a rabbit, you ...

DC Were you catching rabbits?

Mr Q Oh yes, I mean, this was one of our nice little earners, 'cos, particularly in the war years. I mean, there was a big market for rabbits and you could get, you know – if you could 'loob' rabbits, as we used to call – catch them with the snares, and if you were able to 'lamp' rabbits, which was another way to get a good number of rabbits, you could do very well indeed – there was no – but of course, it was the war years and it was illegal to go out and catch rabbits by light – even if you had the farmer's permission. But I do remember, with my elder brother, my father – this was during the war years – we were catching out with the light catching rabbits up in Maughold, and we were returning home, we were coming across the new Maughold churchyard – it was new in the sense that it was just being developed at that time – I'm talking about 1941-42, something like that, and we were going across the churchyard and of course we were in the dark, because of course we had already extinguished the old carbide lamp – that had been put out.

DC But you'd got a few rabbits with you, had you?

Mr Q Oh, we were loaded with rabbits – father was loaded down with rabbits, my elder brother, who was ahead of me walking, was loaded with rabbits, I was carrying rabbits and we're all a bit nervy, walking across this churchyard in the dark. And we were half-way across it, and there was an almighty banging noise – *clunk, clunk* – and I thought my end had come. I thought that there was at least there was a ghost going to jump up and grab me (*laughter*) – nearly died. And transpired that what it was, they had dug a grave for the next day, and they had put a sheet of galvanised over the top of the grave. Father, being in the front, had trod on it and given this big *clunk, clunk* noise (*laughter*) and my brother and I nearly dropped dead coming back with all our load of rabbits.

DC But in the country, presumably you had plenty of eggs, you had vegetables, you had plenty of milk as well – you wouldn't have gone short?

Mr Q Well, we certainly had a distinct advantage over those that lived in the town because we had the ability, through gardens or through an arrangement with a farmer where your father may work, to grow a few potatoes, to, to – and, you know, you could keep some hens and get some eggs etc. So we had that advantage, probably an advantage, as I say, over those that lived in the towns. And we would be going up on the farms and helping out etc. I remember we – again, I have a recollection of this, with a friend of mine, who is now departed unfortunately, we used to go to a local farm to get our milk. And we would have an enamel can each and we would go up onto the street and we would go and knock on the door. Well, ostensibly we'd go and help with the milking, and then we would go in to see the dear old lady, the farmer's wife, and get our milk ...

DC Yes.

Mr Q ... and I have this picture, and my friend and I used to often think about this and reflect on it. We'd go into the dairy and she would say, 'Come in boys, we'll get your milk.' And she was a lady – probably about my age, but she seemed old at the time – and the milk that she was going to dish out, again, was in an earthenware jar, and she would have a 'bumper' again, as we'd call it – a jug with a handle, long handle on it, and err ... a measure, sort of thing – and we would – she'd take our enamel jugs, and she would go to this jar, and she would lean over it to get our measure of milk. But she had misfortunate – she always had a drop on the end of her nose, (*laughter*) no matter whether it – no matter whether it was summer time or winter time, she had – it was almost as if it was plastic – it was there. And she would lean over the jar, and we were ten, eleven year olds at the most, and we would stand there with our – we couldn't take our eyes off this, because we were in fear that it would be dislodged when she was scooping our milk from the jar, you know, but it never seemed to come off, (*laughter*) it never seemed to get dislodged and we would get our milk, breathe a sigh of relief and, you know, hasty retreat home. But public health wasn't err, hygiene wasn't so ...

DC As I said before – that's what I said earlier – hygiene wasn't quite the same.

Mr Q No, no – quite different, quite different, quite different.

DC Well, did you, what – did you get far from home, then, I mean, were you in just

this small area near your home all the time, were you, or ...?

Mr Q No, we were generally around the village, I mean, when we were, you know, say in our five, six, seven, eight, we would walk up to our grandparents up at Smeale and up at umm, up at umm, at the Lhen, well, Gob Goramoore, as I call it, and I – again, there was a sweetshop at Smeale corner, and we used to have a penny or something to go in there to get some sweets on our way up to grandmother's, and an old lady ran the shop, and she never used brown paper bags – she always used like cornet shaped bits of newspaper that had been shaped into cornets ...

DC Yes.

Mr Q ... and she would shove all these cornets in a long row and when you went in to get your sweets, she, of course, had to dislodge a cornet shaped bag to put your sweets in. So she would open the – she'd grab this long collection of bags, then she would blow profusely, (*laughter*) blow and blow into these bags to try to dislodge one. And when she would dislodge one, she would then put her hand in the jar and scoop you out some sweets, you know. But again, you know, I mean, we think of all our hygiene rules and regulations today, but this was par for the course.

DC What about – if you went to bakers' shops, butchers' shops, grocers and so on, I mean, there was a lot of handling with those, as well.

Mr Q Oh yes, but again, very, very rough and ready. I mean, there was two bakers to my recollection that used to come round the country with a horse and cart and latterly, of course, with vans. So you'd get your, get your bread from, from ...

DC It was pretty fresh, wasn't it then?

Mr Q Oh, very fresh indeed. And out in Andreas where we lived of course, there was a butcher there, he subsequently had a shop in Ramsey, but I mean, I do recollect, he used to be making brawn out in the street. You know, he had a kind of a cast iron boiler with an open fire underneath it and he would boil up all the bits of meat to make the brawn. And a sort of a standing joke was that he would, you know, put sheep's heads and things like that in. And I say, the joke was that he used to leave the eyes in to you through the week, sort of situation,

(laughter) you know.

DC The rural toilet arrangements were never much more than primitive, were they?

Mr Q No, very, very primitive. I know latterly we were living at *Ballavolley* at Ballaugh where the – well, it's the Wildlife Park is there now, but it was a rail – a gatehouse for the railway then. And so that would be going into the late '40s, early '50s, and it was still a question of a '*Thie Veg*' down the garden. And that's well into the '50s ...

DC Yes.

Mr Q ... and, you know, I mean you were up market if you had a single-seater or a double-seater. *(laughter)* Some of them of them used to have capacity for two on the one seat.

DC There were even – I've seen a triple somewhere, where there was two adult and one small one for a child. *(laughter)*

Mr Q That must have been up market *(laughter)* David, because I recollected we thought that we were up market with having two, you know, one for the child and one for the adult.

DC This is a communal activity that seems to have passed out! *(laughter)*

Mr Q Well, it certainly does. I mean, IRIS [Integration and Recycling of the Island's Sewage] had not been heard of, I mean, I don't think there was anything to – any sort of ... umm ... IRIS hadn't, well, it certainly hadn't been heard of. But irises wouldn't grow very well down there, but I assure you, we had terrific rhubarb!

DC *(laughter)* Pocket money – you said you used to go and get a – presumably a bit of money from rabbits, but you wouldn't get much in the way of pocket money, either, would you?

Mr Q Oh no, you wouldn't, not from your parents – you'd get very, very little from them. But you know, there were other ways, I mean, I mentioned my father used to work on Crennell's threshing mill, and of course, when we were going round

from farm to farm threshing, I mean, we used to follow them around in the weekends and holidays – if there was a holiday, we would be with them. And of course, the little earner at that time was, of course, the long tails [rats] when they were threshing, the long tails would be shooting out of the stacks, and if you had a good dog, you would get a good number of long tails, and there was a bounty system in being then, here in the Isle of Man, for long tails, and if you caught a female long tail, that was four pence – you could get four pence bounty on a female long tail, and you could get tuppence on a male long tail. The point being that you had to take the whole body, so to speak, up to the blacksmith if you were going to claim the four pence. If you just produced a tail, you only got tuppence.

DC Yes, of course.

Mr Q So we would be out at the weekend – we'd be catching long tails, and then, of course, we had to get them to the blacksmith to get our bounty. Now when we were going to school on a Monday morning, of course, we couldn't hand them in then because there was no – the Smithy wasn't open, so we used to have this parcel – newspaper parcel – with the bodies and the tails wrapped up in newspaper, and we would get into school and we used to hide them ...

DC *(laughter)* You took them to school?!

Mr Q We used to hide them in the cloakroom until we were going home, and then we would trade them in then, you know. *(laughter)*

DC *(laughter)* Oh dear, oh dear – were you ever caught doing that?

Mr Q I don't remember us being caught. I think it was – we were pretty deft at hiding them, you know, we were pretty good at hiding them. But it was a nice little earner – four pence and tuppence we used to get, we used to get, aye.

DC It must have made some difference to your sense of smell, as well. *(laughter)*

Mr Q Well, no, I think we grew up with it, it didn't seem to bother us, you know. But, again, talking about the long tails, and I hope I'm not putting your listeners off here, but we – there was a chap who used to drive the threshing mill with father, and I remember this day he was sitting in our house, and of course, working on

the mill he would have pockets full of binder twine, pockets full of binder twine, and he was sitting in the house this day and he produced this old brown paper bag out of his pocket, and he had a few Manx Knobs left in this bag and ...

DC These are sweets, of course .

Mr Q Sweets – I beg your pardon, yes, yes, sweets, yes. And he was dishing them out and there was one to go to mother and there was one for my brother and I and my brother, my brothers, I think – yes, we were all at home – and eventually he ran – the bag was empty, and he said, ‘Oh, it’s alright.’ We were a bit concerned that he had – you know, that he hadn’t left one for himself. He said, ‘No, no,’ he said, ‘I’ve got one here somewhere.’ And he puts his hand into his pocket and he pulls out a handful of binder twine which was from the mill, and he starts searching through the binder twine, (*laughter*) searching through it, and then, half-way through the search, he finds a long tail that had been cut off, so he transfers that to his other pocket, carries on with the search, found the missing Manx Knob, and everybody was happy! (*laughter*)

DC Some of Edgar Quine’s memories of childhood days. During that same visit we also spoke at some length about his career in the Hong Kong Police Force during which he received numerous decorations – most notably the OBE in 1982. His involvement during the period of the cultural revolution, the many riots and how thousands of illegal immigrants were being dealt with on a daily basis will be the subject of a future programme.

[Second interview]

DC Edgar is making a return visit to the programme, the former Ayre MHK Edgar Quine previously provided some delightful reminiscences of his younger days. But today we find him not in the sunlit north of the Isle of Man, but far away in Hong Kong. Like many of his generation, Richard Edgar Quine was required to do National Service and it took him to the Far East, where he became a member of the Royal Corps of Military Police. When his army service ended in 1954 he joined the Hong Kong police. He went on to become the Senior Assistant Commissioner of the Force, gaining many distinguished awards, including the OBE. I began by asking Edgar what Hong Kong was like when he joined the Force there in 1954.

Mr Q Well Hong Kong then was very low key compared to what it is now. I mean the population at that time was just over a million people. Now, of course, it's seven million people. So it was really quite low key. The police force, when I joined, would be about three thousand men, three-four thousand men. I mean, when I left, the police force was, if you include the regulars, the auxiliaries and the civilians, they were thirty-five thousand men.

DC When did you experience the first riots, would you say?

Mr Q Well, it was in 1956. I had been there, at that time, just a year or two, and of course, the political backdrop in Hong Kong is of course, that there were communist elements, those that were sympathetic to China, and there were the Kuomintang – Kuomintang, or Nationalist elements who were supporters of Chiang Kai-shek and Formosa [Taiwan], and that always made life rather precarious because they were very – there was a lot of antagonism between the two sides. And there was a third element, you might say, the Hong Kong born people who would float either way. But in 1956 on the 10th October, which is the Nationalist, the Kuomintang celebration day, in one of the big resettlement estates, the communists pulled down some of the banners and floral pylows [sp ???] and one thing led to another, and then rioting broke out between – essentially between the communists and the nationalists – went on for several days, there was – I think at the end of the four or five days in total, the rioting went on, I think, we ended up with over sixty people killed, and I think we had over six thousand people arrested and put before the Court.

DC Six thousand people! That must have taken some dealing with?

Mr Q Oh yes, yes. They were put into holding camps and processed under emergency legislation and subsequently either released or brought before the courts.

DC You were injured in this, weren't you?

Mr Q Yes. On the third day of the rioting, up in a place called Shek Kip Mei in Kowloon, somebody took a pot-shot at me and I got shot in the leg and I was then – I spent the rest of the year of the event recuperating in hospital. But it was quite an experience – quite different from what, you know, (*laughter*) I had anticipated. But very, from a young man's point of view, all very absorbing.

DC Were these armed rioters then, or not?

Mr Q They were not – generally the arms amounted to knives and spears and things like that – home-made spears. And err, but of course some of them did raid gun clubs and got a hold of a number of weapons – firearms – and of course, although they were small in number, I mean, they could do a lot of damage with firearms.

DC Then did it settle down after that?

Mr Q Yes, I mean, in Hong Kong, of course, life was always – everything was pretty hectic because there were always backdrop problems. I mean, there was the problem of illegal immigrants coming into Hong Kong from China. They had to be dealt with. There was the problem which is, of course, part and parcel of Hong Kong, which was illegal gambling, the problems with the drugs, the problems with the Triad Society which was exploiting the criminal situation, so there was always a backdrop of endless problems. But again, from a young man's point of view, from a policing point of view, that made it all the more interesting. But I mean, I didn't stay on the internal security side all that long. I mean, after about four years I moved over to the CID side, and then I was transferred to Commercial Crime, which would be – UK equivalent would be the Serious Crime Squad, where you deal with commercial – well, obviously the frauds and things like that. No doubt based on the fact that I had some knowledge of Accounts, having ...

DC (*laughter*) So there was – I mean, the burgeoning financial sector was there at this stage, then, and that kind of corruption was getting in, was it?

Mr Q Oh, it was, it was developing, and developing in quite a big way. The, you know, the Hong Kong economy – it was based more, at that time, on manufacturing and that sort of thing, because there was a reservoir of cheap labour and Hong Kong was the base of the economy was tied more to that. But that changed as the years went by. It became less important in some ways than finance and other forms of the economy – including the service industry for tourism etc., – they all built up and eventually became very, very important.

DC What were the *Star Ferry* riots?

Mr Q Well, they, there's a ferry – 'cos Hong Kong, being 230 odd islands, plus a peninsula, the ferries – there's ferry services that go to all different parts of that to provide the communication that's necessary. The *Star Ferry* – this particular *Star Ferry* is the main – or at that time, was the main connection between Kowloon peninsula and Hong Kong Island, the business centre. And they are ferries that carry maybe four hundred people, and they go back and forwards. And the sort of charges for those ferries, those trips, are very, very small, but there was five cents increase – there's the Hong Kong five cents, which is nothing, really, but it was exploited by certain agitators and their youthful elements, and of course, rioting broke out and then arson spilled out from that.

DC So it was used as an excuse, in fact.

Mr Q It was used as an excuse, basically. There was a public enquiry afterwards and there was nothing fundamental came out of that but ...

DC But they wouldn't have six thousand people arrested on that, presumably?

Mr Q No, but even out of that, I think it was over five hundred people put before the courts, and scores of people injured, of course – scores of people injured.

DC When did this 'cultural revolution' have an impact, then?

Mr Q Well, again, I'm sure everybody's heard of the Red Guards movement in China. The Red Guards movement, of course, started in the middle '60s, and the communist elements within Hong Kong, and Macau, they, I think, felt somewhat at a loss as to what they should be doing to be in step with what was going on in China. And so there was a move made by the communist-supporting elements within Hong Kong to try to drum up the same sort of activity within Hong Kong and it was initially borne out on strikes. There was unrest in some of the manufacturing places, then there was riots, then there was a bomb campaign, and then there was gun fire and battles on the border with the equivalent, I suppose, of the Home Guard here – that sort of element. And these went on. There was a period of about six months or more when this was very acute, when there was a lot of rioting, and lot shooting and a lot of fighting going on.

DC Were you involved, to some extent, in that as well, then?

Mr Q Oh yes, yes. I was, at that time, I was the Commander of Central District, I was the Chief Superintendent in charge of Central District, which – and Government House was within Central District, so of course, that was the focus, they all tried to come down upon Government House for their protesting. So I was very much involved in that – involved in that in the sense that I had a command for that Central – had a command responsibility for the Central area.

DC So you – your, your ...

Mr Q But I also commanded a riot unit in the field at the same time – we had dual responsibility.

DC Right. So the group that you were commanding, then, would be a target in themselves presumably?

Mr Q Oh yes, yes, obviously, ‘cos we’re, you know, we would be the ...

DC Front line even, were you?

Mr Q Front – very, very much in the front line. We lost – again lost a number of policemen. I mean, things became very bad at one stage. I remember with the border incidents, for example, we had one border incident at Sha Tau Kok where the military elements on the communist side opened fire on our, one of our companies, and we lost five men killed and a number of men injured in that one incident. And we had more than a dozen men killed during this – that particular emergency.

DC So your men would be armed, presumably, would they?

Mr Q Oh, the Hong Kong police is an armed police force, but of course ...

DC From when?

Mr Q Oh, from the word ‘go,’ I mean, they’ve always been an armed police force.

DC Right.

Mr Q But of course, when we had to deal with riots, we went into what we call an

‘emergency formation’ and we would have riot units. And our riot units would be about 120 – 130 men – normally three platoons, or four platoons, and they would be armed with a whole range of weapons from batons, CS gas, and ultimately, *Greener* guns and rifles.

DC What body defence would they have though?

Mr Q Only a shield – a shield and a tin hat. Even to the days I left in terms of normal confrontation they would use rattan shields. And they did have, you know, they did wear tin hats and goggles and that sort of thing.

DC What – how – can you describe the worst element of one of these riots for instance then?

Mr Q Well, I mean, if – just look at some of the elements here. I mean, if, for example, when we were going through the bombing campaign, we had situations where they would try to draw our riot companies into a particular position in the streets with some concocted situation, and then we would get bombs lobbed – home-made bombs lobbed from roof tops down upon our companies. You would get that situation.

DC What are – are these just cans with petrol as well into ...

Mr Q Oh no, no, no.

DC They’re much worse than that?

Mr Q No, they were – they were like a pineapple, they were ...

DC Like a grenade, or ...?

Mr Q Yes, they were pre-cast like, and they used to use firework explosive to set them off ...

DC Right.

Mr Q ... and so you would get like shrapnel that would go all over the place. And many civilians were also, of course, killed and injured during this situation.

DC Did they bomb buildings?

Mr Q Yes, and set on fire, of course. They would try to conceal bombs on the public transport, they would bomb buildings, police, of course, was a major target. And, you know, I think, also at this situation, if you can think about it in terms of the ordinary people trying to live and go about their, go about their normal work – it was very, very difficult for them and they were getting pulled with all the propaganda that was being put across at the same time.

DC This wasn't widely reported in UK newspapers as far as I remember.

Mr Q As I showed you this morning, there was some coverage in, you know, the UK newspapers, but it wasn't, I don't think it was covered broadly – widely.

DC It wasn't thought to be important, or what?

Mr Q Well, I suspect, at that time, it was out on a limb – Hong Kong, another one of the colonies, you know, I suspect it probably didn't assume great importance in their eyes.

DC So the colonialism of the police force had gone by this time, had it, or what?

Mr Q Well, colonialism was still there, I mean, Hong Kong was still a colony. We still had ...

DC Yes, you were still a colonial force, then.

Mr Q Oh yes, and we were a colonial force, I mean, we operated in a conventional structure. We had moved, of course, from being a paramilitary force, more towards a constabulary force with an emergency capability. We had moved along from that, and we had obviously developed a lot of expertise in emergency control. I mean I came back – I was sent back to the UK in 1981, I think it was, to do a presentation to ACPOL – the Association Chief of Police – err, Assistant – that's right Assistant Chief Police Officers' Association, and I did a presentation for them on our riot control techniques there, so we had developed a lot of expertise in this field. It certainly – Northern Ireland ourselves were the two British elements that had experience in this area.

DC You're listening to Manx Radio, and on 'Time to Remember' today, former MHK Edgar Quine is recalling some of the events he experienced during his 30 years in the Hong Kong Police.

DC We get to the 1970s then, are the riots now? Have you put those behind you by 1970?

Mr Q Yes, I mean, from time to time there were always riots, whether it was a riot arising out of a football match, whether it was difference of opinion, so there were always smaller scale events, but I mean ...

DC No bombs?

Mr Q No, no, the bombs, the bombing was phased out, I would think, about 1969-1970. And the last manifestation of that – of the bombing campaign was that the – they were putting down fake bombs which was causing, causing a lot of disruption but doing any great harm.

DC What would you have been involved in in the early '70s, then?

Mr Q Well, in the early – in the early 1970s I had – well, when I joined the force, of course, I had been in uniform branch, and then I went, as I say, into CID, and ultimately I – and following on to that I went into commercial crime, which was the – our – Hong Kong – well, serious crime squad equivalent. After that I was pulled out an accelerated scheme. As a Sub Inspector I was pulled out and put – I was promoted to an Assistant Superintendent, so I missed Senior Inspector rank, I missed Chief Inspector rank and I went straight up onto an accelerated scheme that made me the Assistant Superintendent ...

DC Yes.

Mr Q ... and then, by early 1970s – and indeed, by 1960 ... in the early 1960s, as a man in my late 20s, as a Superintendent, I was commanding police divisions with 600 men.

DC Really?!

Mr Q I had, oh, 600 men when I was in my late 20s because the scale of things, of

course, is quite different to what we think about in manpower terms here. So, by the '70s I was a Divisional Commander with anything from 600 to 800 men to control. And then, from there, of course, I moved away from that side. I went back to where I had originally started and I went back onto the CID ...

DC Oh, right.

Mr Q ... and I switched back to CID, I became Deputy Director of CID, and then I was the Head of CID for several years, and having done that, I was then switched across to become director of all operations in Hong Kong, and from there I was, for a short period, well, a period of a year or so, I was Deputy Commissioner of Operations – acting as Deputy Commissioner of Operations.

DC What was the immigration problem that started, really I suppose, in the '70s?

Mr Q Well, the immigration problem started, really, from the late '40s, but at a very small scale, because of course in 19 ...

DC Right, there was always people sort of creeping in.

Mr Q That's right. From the time that Mao Tse-tung, from the time the communists took over in China there was an illegal immigration problem. There were people in China wanting to come into Hong Kong for different reasons. Some were initially to escape the communists and others were for purely economic reasons, but it became a much more important problem in the last half of the 1960s, because, when the cultural revolution started in 1966, the Red Guards disturbances, and all the Red Guards activities in China in 1966, a lot of people wanted to get out of China, and so there was a big increase then, a big increase in illegal immigration. About three years after the cultural revolution started, we had reached the stage then where we were arresting and repatriating a thousand illegal immigrants a day. Now in the old days, as they say, when we were – in the late '50s, when we were dealing with illegal immigrants in those days, we simply, if they were arrested, we would simply push them back through the wire fence and they would go back to China that way ...

DC Yea.

Mr Q ... but of course, when you're dealing with a thousand, then we had much more

formal arrangements and we would bring them by lorry, up to the border, and hand them over to the communists.

DC Were these illegal immigrants that were – you’re talking about a thousand, now, were they all Chinese?

Mr Q Oh yes, this is illegal immigrants as opposed to Vietnamese refugees. These were people from China trying to get into Hong Kong.

DC So the Vietnamese refugees, then, is a very different situation, isn’t it?

Mr Q Oh yes. The Vietnamese refugees, of course, that flowed from the fall of Saigon and people trying to get – people from what South Vietnam, trying to get out, you know, as the northern – the North Vietnamese people took control of the south. And they were being pushed out, really, by the northern authorities, and they were being put onto old rickety boats and told to just get out and go.

DC Now this was well publicised international, I think, wasn’t it?

Mr Q Oh yes, yes, that was well publicised because of course there were so many of them, and it was tied in of course with the Vietnamese war, etc., so it was well, well publicised.

DC Alright – what was done about them?

Mr Q Well, the illegal immigrants, as I say, we sent them back. But with the Vietnamese refugees, they were put into camps. We had camps and they were put into these camps and they waited – some of them waited there years and years – they waited there until they could be moved on to other countries. Now some would opt to go back, but very, very few. But most of them would stay there for two – three four years, until they could get – lived in hope of getting, anyway, acceptance into Germany or the States, or Australia or wherever.

DC Who met the cost of looking after them – feeding them and so on?

Mr Q Oh, very largely Hong Kong.

DC Yes.

Mr Q You'd get a certain amount of help from the United Nations organisations and charities, but Hong Kong carried the cost of these.

DC What were their conditions like – living conditions?

Mr Q Pretty rough. Very austere indeed, they were just camps, basic shells, basic medical attention and food. So they lived in pretty rough conditions. And there was degree of lawlessness in these camps, because if you get 100,000 people in a camp, you will always get elements that try to control that and try to exploit that, so we would have riots in these camps and we would have camps set on fire, all that sort of problem had to be policed.

DC This must have involved, really, quite a large element of the police force or the security forces in trying to deal with all of these things.

Mr Q Oh yes – thousands is the answer to that. I mean, our frontier police alone, the frontier police in the '80s in the '70s and '80s – the frontier police, they would have about 4,000 men, the marine police had more than that, I think, we had over a hundred vessels patrolling the water in Hong Kong, and there'd be over – I think – well onto 4,000 men and women in the marine police and on top of that, of course, we had military assistance as well – there was military assistance along the border. So this was a very big drain on resources.

DC And we would see pictures of some of these vessels coming in – just unbelievably loaded with people – on television in the UK.

Mr Q Oh yes. They were being – I mean, some of the vessels – the vessels shouldn't have been at sea. They just were not fit to be at sea, and it's estimated that 250,000 people perished – you know, on these vessels, trying to go to other countries from Vietnam, so, I mean, and we're talking of families, here – not able bodied men and women necessarily. Families – they estimate – the official estimate is that over a quarter of a million perished trying to get away from Vietnam.

DC Well, on a lighter note, then, what's the story about the Manx tartan?

Mr Q Ha, yes, yes, yes well, the Commandant of the Auxiliary Police Force, which is Hong Kong's equivalent of the 'Specials' here, the Commandant in the '70s,

and, indeed, plus a good number of years, was the late Sir Douglas Clague. And I worked quite closely with Sir Douglas when I was Director of Operations, and indeed, when I was Head of Traffic, and Head of CID I also had a lot to do with Sir Douglas and his activities as Head of the Auxiliaries. And when Sir Douglas died, I seized that opportunity for to suggest that we get the Auxiliary Police Band, which Sir Douglas, of course, had been the Commandant, along with the other elements of the Auxiliary Police, that we seize that opportunity to put the band into the Manx tartan.

DC Not into kilts, though?

Mr Q Well, into trows [trousers].

DC (*laughter*) Yes, that's right.

Mr Q And if you go to the Laxey – the Laxey Glen Mill – the woollen mill, and walk up the stairs, at the top of the stairs, you will see a picture of the Auxiliary Police Band in their tartan. Because they were quite a strong band, they had about forty men, I would think. I think about forty men were in the Auxiliary Police Band, and our regular police band would be about over 100 men, but this was the auxiliary element.

DC Did this service in the Hong Kong police, then, afford you any kind of social life?

Mr Q You got used to living with the job. If – I mean – if you do it all your life, you really don't think very much about it. If – when you are in CID, you would be on call, when you're in traffic, you are on call, when you're Head of CID you are still on call for certain situations. And we had an arrangement there were two – there was two principals, if you were a – whatever your command was, whether you were commanding a relatively small unit or large unit, or ultimately at force level, you should live within your area of command, so you would have to move. As you had it – as you changed your job, you would move and live in the area where your command was. So that was the first thing – you were on call within your area. And the sort of second principal was that if you left your home, you always left your whereabouts in the police control room – the colony control room – so that if something happened, they could always get hold of you. I remember Christmas Day – it would be 1969, I'm guessing now –

when the *Hoi Fung* [sp ???] came into Hong Kong harbour with – I think there would probably be a couple of thousand Vietnamese refugees crowded into it – I was about to sit down to my Christmas dinner when I got a call saying that they had arrived in our waters and I don't think I got home for the next three or four days, where we had to turn out and deal with it. So you lived with it, because it was part of the job.

DC How many of your officers had to go off with stress?

Mr Q We hadn't heard of stress. I'm sure some of our officers were ill, but, I mean, stress was not something which was, you know, recognised at that time. If officers were ill they would be ultimately perhaps signed off and receive proper treatment, but stress, as such, wasn't a problem. I mean, I, you know, still hold a view that stress is something which is – although there are genuine cases – it is something which is exploited. And my experience of stress and those who've dealt with me – my senior command is that they worked on the principle that if you were sufficiently busy, you wouldn't have time to think about it.

DC After retirement Edgar Quine found a new career in Manx politics. He served as MHK for Ayre from November 1986 to August 2004. And there will be more lifetime memories at the same time next week.

END OF INTERVIEW