

Interviewee: Jim Kirkland (JK)	Interviewer: Alyne Jones (AJ)
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Jim Kirkland (JK) looking at and reading from his father's diaries. Diary entries in italics.

Speaking to ?

JK: Had a walk, This is Twenty-ninth o' April...Fourteenth o' April, Nineteen twenty-nine. *Decided to have a walk down through the fields on the Merse, and a lot of peesweep eggs, and mainly in [?],* so that'd be them ready to sit and hatch out.

?: And was that what you called...?

JK: Peesweeps, I think peesweeps are lapwings. I'm sure that's what they're called.

?: And you always called them peesweeps?

JK: Always ca'd peesweeps mm hmm.

?: Because of the sound?

JK: And we had a lot of them, on the Merse. And now we've got none.

?: What d'you think that's to do with then Jim, is it the farming changes?

JK: Last year or the year before they did a check-up on...they put a camera beside the nests on Mersehead, tae record what was happenin' tae the eggs, and discovered it was badgers. But it's not public knowledge.

?: There's a lot of badgers down the Solway I've seen them.

JK: Oh aye, there is.

?: So if we go over the page to Tuesday the sixteenth of April there's a wee bit here about his social life?

JK: *Went to New Abbey tonight, playin' badminton.* Playin' badminton. Then I don't know what that other wee bit says, badminton then something else at New Abbey?

?: *Beat them,* Is it beat them? Oh I can't I don't know! Don't know. So if we go over the next page, what date are we on, let me see something? Thursday the Eighteenth

of April.

JK: *Young was over today at [Saidler] is it? To reform something wire?*

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?: *Telephone wire.*

JK: *Telephone wire maybe. Finished puttin' out dung from...for mangold today, manure came for them today.*

?: *Came for same today.*

JK: *Yep that's one of father's sayings, 'sames' appears quite regularly.*

?: *So does that mean that he got the dung in for the mangolds?*

JK: *He put the dung out o' the midden, onto the field. And I think, years ago, they put the dung in the dreels. Then they split the dreels, so's the dung was in the bottom. All... all hard work.*

?: *So his expression *same for the day* is just...?*

JK: *It's just a sayin' that father had.*

?: *Came for same today.*

JK: *Mm hmm. Young got twenty-four bushels of oats...today, to pay back when he gets another eight bags. And I presume the oats was to feed his horses, because Young was a neighbourin' farmer that had a lot o' horses.*

?: *So we go onto...*

JK: *The Twenty-fourth o' April. Bought Twenty-four pigs from James King[?], forty-three shillings each, delivered. Now the pigs would be tae drink a' the whey, what was left over when they were makin' cheese, because they were a spring calvin' herd, and a' the milk was made intae cheese. That's where a' the whey went to the pigs.*

?: *So it was a kind of eco-system you needed the pigs.*

JK: *Mm hmm.*

?: I see he was out in Dumfries, here it looks like on Friday the Twenty-sixth of April?

JK: Oh aye. *Was at Lyceum tonight, at Charlie [Kimble] and his Entertainers. Had a great experience.*

?: *You know.*

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JK: *You know!* [laughs]

?: So the Lyceum wasn't just a picture house in Nineteen Twenty-nine it must have been something like a music hall?

JK: It must have been.

?: A variety...

JK: They must o' had a stage where they could do variety shows. *Was round at [Klonyard] today and rented two parks. One, fourteen pound, the other, six pound ten shillings. Sowed four acres swede turnips today.*

?: He's had a day of rest on Sunday, the Twenty-eighth.

JK: Always went to the church on a Sunday. *Was at Castle Douglas today...*

?: *Station? Stallion parade.*

JK: *Stallion parade at Castle Douglas.* I don't know what that is?

?: Was it...*tennis, netting tonight?*

JK: Oh ay, they would be sortin' up the tennis nettin' for the tennis court at Suffolk.

?: *Having dance [me tenth] in school.*

JK: In school.

?: *Nightingale Band Castle Douglas.*

JK: Oh from Castle Douglas. Anyways.

?: Here's a stallion parade on Wednesday May the eighth.

JK: *Six horses present. W. Young horse...*

?: *Best.*

JK: Was it *best, there?* Young was the neighbourin' farmer that father was very friendly with. *Twenty-nine. Tried to take Young's foals and our foals to smiddy today, to sort their feet, but couldn't catch them.* [Laughs]

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?: So would he have a lot of foals and horses on the farm?

JK: Oh they would well...I can mind o' five horse here when I was young. [*Clock chimes*] I can mind o' three. [...] But I was at a funeral in Dundee in December, and the chap was there and he could tell me that there was five horses on Cowcourse when he was a wee boy, and he could even name them. He could name the four horses that stood in the stables and the one was in a wee box outside the door.

?: And did your father keep these as work horses?

JK: Aye they were work horses, and they were obviously mares amongst them that they could put in foal, to produce their next work horse.

?: Terrible!

JK: [*Laughs*]

?: Can you tell me about the chap in Dundee with the good memory?

JK: Him and his father and mother and sister would come here, durin' the war so's they were away from Dumfries, in case there was any bombs landed at the ICI plant in Dumfries. And he could remember everything that was happenin' here, when I was that small that I couldny remember anything! *Eighteenth of February, Thirty. Had a days shootin' today. Young, Grierson and myself got thirty-four rabbits. Had two queys at Dumfries today, price twenty-two pound and tenpence, and twenty pound and eleven pence. Not a bad trade.* And a quey, is a three year auld heifer, just calved, ready to startin' milk.

?: And the rabbits would you eat a lot o' rabbits when you were younger was a lot of rabbits always killed on the farm?

JK: I can remember...at the top o' the steadin' there was a shed wi' a bar on it, like as if it was a pulley, and that's where the rabbits were hung up, they were gutted and...the two back legs had a hole put in the so you could click them together and they hung up on a board, and they stayed there till they a' went away tae a game man in Dumfries that came and bought them all, took them a' away for sale, for eatin'.

?: So you didn't eat many yourself?

JK: I don't think so, nuh. This is the Twenty-fourth o' March. *Start to sow corn at wood today, our own seed.* In these days ye were allowed tae use yer own seed, ye hadny tae use new seed every year.

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?: And why would that change? See he's got this Nineteen thirty-eight if you see this, he's also talkin' about...

JK: Aye seed barley, usin' our own seed. Ye used to...when you thrashed it, ye opened up the grader at the back o' the drum, and it produced a very large seed, then ye tested that by puttin' water on paper, and the seed in-between, and count the germination. *Eighth of September Thirty-six. Brought in brackens.* Well they used to use dried brackens to put on the bottom o' the stack, so's that the corn was built on the top o' the brackens. And I presume that was to keep the bottom row o' sheafs dry. And we were cartin' in corn after that it said, from Seeds Field.

?: Now that's not corn as in maize, what did he call corn?

JK: Corn was oats, aye.

?: And was it for feeding?

JK: It was all for feeding. It was a' thrashed, and the straw was eaten by the cattle, and the grain was a' bruised and fed to the cattle and the horses. And this was the Ninth of September. *Not at town today.* It was a Wednesday, so Wednesday was the day you went to the town, to the market, then you got your weeks groceries. Every Wednesday, that's what happened every Wednesday.

?: That was market day?

JK: That was market day in Dumfries. It was a must.

?: Now here's a wee notebook Nineteen thirty-six. It hasn't got a date on it but he's got a...a note.

JK: *Odd man wanted at term, will... Odd man wanted at term, with boy for byres, wife to milk and work when required. Must be good milkers.* This was obviously an advert that he was puttin' in the paper. That he was needin' help.

?: Ah.

JK: That's what that's been.

?: So it's been an advert.

JK: It's been an advert in a paper. 'Cause it was always...man and his wife, and boy, for doin' the milkin'.

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?: And would they have accommodation on the farm?

[*Clock chimes*]

JK: There was a cottage at the farm road end where they stayed in. And in these days, they were probably milkin' about forty cows, in a byre.

?: We've got this on Thursday the Tenth of September.

JK: *Set nets at Cottage Field, down roadside.* That must be for catchin' rabbits I presume. So whether the field was netted, and there was parts in the net that the rabbits could get through intae a catchin' pen, there must hae been something. It doesny tell us any more it just says *set nets down cottage roadside.* And that was an oat field, so I presume it was when they were cuttin' the oats wi' the binder, and when a' the rabbits come out at the finish up they run for the road out and they got caught.

?: Because that's harvest time September [?]?

JK: September they were harvestin', Tenth o' September.

?: Eighth that it was.

JK: *The Second of May, Thirty-nine. Was at lecture at Kirkbean School tonight, by Mrs Forgie, on gas filling of masks. This would be for gas masks during the War.*

?: And you're saying you remember evacuees?

JK: And there was evacuees...they evacuated the women and children out o' Glasgow, and they brought them, to Dumfries Station, in the train, and everybody that was allocated evacuees went to the station, and the first family family out would go to Mr McMinn at Kirk House, and the next family come out o' the train, and they went to Kirkland o' Cowcorse and it went on like that, a' round the area till the train was empty. The family that came here was a lady, and her daughter and her son, from Glasgow, but originally, the father and mother were Jews, and they had to flee out o' Russia, because the father was a brilliant scientist, and his father was a brilliant scientist, and Russia didn't like Jews. So they'd to flee under a train, a stock train, into Germany, and eventually they landed in Paris, and as the war crept on, they had to move in front to London, then they got to Glasgow, then they were put out o' Glasgow, because o' the Clydeside Blitz, or what they were expectin' was gonna happen, and the family came here, and they stayed here for...I think two months, then went back to Glasgow and they were obviously meant to contact the authorities, tae get back out and mother had said to the lady, "If ye've got to come back, just come, don't ask anybody, just come." And they came and spent two years the next time,

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here, and the father would come at the weekends when he could get here, and the mother taught at a school at Cavens which I presume a Dr Barnardo's home, and she taught there. And that lady finished up a professor in America. And her son is a professor of rocks and stones at the moment, and the daughter is steeped in history, she is a professor of history, at Overland University. This is Nineteen forty-two, the Twenty-ninth. *Twenty-ninth of May Forty-two.* It's in the diary here. *Had police force here tonight asking if I would form a special police force for the area.* Now I don't know what this was for but it was obviously somethin' that the police were doin' tae get a' the people that stayed in the country, to keep look out. *Got eighty-eight sleepers split at Kirkbean Sawmill today, got them all home tonight.* Now the sleepers were halved and pointed at...'V' shaped, and they were put round the garden, as the garden fence. And they were there for forty year. [*clock chimes*] *Had forenoon at garden fence.* This was to...puttin' up the sleepers, for the garden fence.

?: If we move on to May Nineteen forty-three, he's got an interesting entry.

JK: *The Thirty-first o' May Forty-three. Start to hoe today. Got bee boxes this afternoon. Got [hails] cut in shallow framed boxes at camp this afternoon. Now I*

presume the camp he was talkin' about was the RAF camp at West Preston. So they must hae been puttin' bee boxes out at the camp, tae get honey for the RAF that was in the camp. And they were startin' to hoe, that would be startin' to hoe turnips. That's what was...turnips was sowed in rows, and not spaced, so they had to space them out about six inches apart, so's they got room tae grow.

?: So the RAF camp at West Preston was part of the war effort down here or what was it?

JK: I presume it was built before the war? The RAF then they had a road from the camp right down along the shore, and they had a bullet proof shed that they could sit in, and the targets were put up along the shore, on a railway track, and the planes come out from Dumfries, and once they were over Cowcorse house, they were allowed to start and fire at these movin' targets, and this was all for target practice for the planes.

?: Course you can still see target practice, or a construction out in the Solway today.

JK: It's still there on the Solway, but this was on land. But the concrete buildin' is still there today. They had a...

?: Can you start saying 'I remember'?

JK: I can remember father telling me that they had dances in the school at Kirkbean, and they had quite a famous dance band from somewhere in Scotland playin' for their

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dance, and when they were stopped for their teabreak, the band says, "Can ye no get somebody to play when we're havin' wir tea?" And, "Oh aye aye Jock might play." So eventually they got Jock persuaded to play durin' the tea-break and when Jock started to play, the band was absolutely astounded, the name and the ability of this chap playing, he could play the music box better as they could. And he was self taught.

?: And who was he, was he just a local?

JK: He was a local lad that they knew could play the accordion. *[Laughs]*

?: What was his surname do you remember?

JK: No that I can't remember.



?: Where he came from?

JK: Obviously he stayed in the area somewhere. [*Laughs*]

?: Was a lot of dances here though I mean your father...you look at these diaries your father was out playing badminton he was out at the picture house...

JK: Oh aye there was dances regular, in Kirkbean, in the school, they were a' held in the schools, because there was no...no village hall really, it was just the schools they cleared the desks and cleared everything out the big room, and that's where they had the dances.

?: And do you remember how people got to the dances? Did some of them go on the back of tractors and trailers and...?

JK: That's what I don't know. I presume they just went on their bikes. They would just go on their push-bikes if they hadny a car, that'd be how they would get to the dance.

?: [...] Your father's diaries are full of ploughing he seems to have, you know he seems to have spent a lot of time ploughing Jim, what do you...?

JK: Well I presume most o' the diaries'll be horse ploughin', but when I left the school in Fifty-four, I was allowed to plough wi' an old Fordson tractor, wi a two-furrow drag plough behind it. And you thought you were in clover! But when you think of what they do nowadays when a tractor appears in wi' a six-furrow reversible behind it and the jobs done in no time. But after...I was relegated to, or promoted, to a wee grey Fergie, wi' a single-furrow plough behind it, and that was magic!

?: Compared to the horse?

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JK: Compared to the horse and compared to the old Fordson tractor wi' a drag plough behind it.

?: Do you remember being out with your father when he was ploughing with the horse?

JK: No, no I can't remember horse ploughing at all now, nuh.

?: Can you read that out?

JK: On *Monday the Eighth o' May, Forty-four*. Mole-catcher came to stay tonight. He came and stayed on the farms and set his traps the next day, then would maybe stay for another two days, hoping that he would get moles. And when he got the moles in the traps, he brought them intae the steading, then he skint the moles, and he tacked them onto a board, maybe about a six inches wide board, and they sat beside the steam boiler in the dairy, to dry out so's they could send them a' away for mole-skin jackets.

?: Would he stay in a bothy or what, where would he stay, was there a...?

JK: I presume he stayed in the farm house there was a bothy on the farm but I presume he stayed in the farm house, 'cause he came from Thornhill so this was his full-time occupation.

?: What was his name the mole-catcher do you remember?

JK: Thorburn. Somebody Thorburn from Thornhill.

?: There was a Thorburn lived in Moniaive.

JK: Could be a connection.

[*Clock chimes*]

?: Do that just say, "I can remember."

JK: I can remember the moleskins bein' nailed onto a board, and it sat in the dairy beside the steam boiler, tae dry out. I can remember, bein' in a field at [Laidland] with father and Mr Lambie, and it was obviously beans, and I was eatin' these beans, and Mr Lambie says, "Don't eat too many o' these, they could be bad for ye." And I was sick for days after it, and I was blue, they reckoned I was blue they thought I was...gonny lose me, wi' the poison o' these beans. But I can't remember it but I remember them bein' told. [*Laughs*]

00:30:28

?: So here's another entry about your eating habits in...September, Nineteen forty-five.

JK: *Nineteen forty-five*. Jim very bad during the night, doctor thinks he has been eatin' too many brambles. [*Laughs*] Oh dear! [*Pause*] And this is September, Forty-five. Took hay roller off tractor, bogey, ready to go to [Laidland] for wheat straw for

*thatch*. Now the thatch was...wheat which grew about four feet tall, then it was put through the thrashin' mill, and it was bunched as it come out the mill, and ye got great thatch and ye just used that for thatchin' the rucks.

?: That's the rucks o' hay?

JK: Rucks o' straw.

?: Rucks o' straw.

JK: Rucks o' straw, mm hmm, that's what ye used for thatchin' them.

?: You also said there about using rushes. Did you have a reed bed o' rushes on the farm, or was it somewhere else?

JK: There might o' been...ye maybe cut rushes, or rashes.

?: Here's September Nineteen forty-seven it said it there somewhere.

JK: Oh! Ye used to use rashes and brackens, for coverin' up potato pits, and turnip pits in the fields.

?: *Cutting rashes on...*

JK: Is it *kale ground this afternoon*? I don't know what that is.

?: That's September Nineteen forty-seven.

JK: But that's...we used to use rashes and brackens for coverin' the turnips, and the mallow. Ye cut them and then let them dry oot and then ye carted them in and that's what they're used for, to save straw because straw would be expensive I expect.

?: So in fact there was an awful lot of things which are now regarded as weeds or useless today that you actually used on the farm?

JK: That's right, I can remember using rashes and brackens for coverin' potato pits and mangolds, tae keep them right, and turnip pits.

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?: And they were never eaten during the winter by any animals then?

JK: Eh no, they were just left on the top of the pits tae keep the 'hings in below dry.

Then they would be thrown out or burnt when the end o' the season come.

?: I can... [*cuts off*]

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<blockquote><strong>JK:</strong> Oh aye, there is.</blockquote>