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Date: 30 October 2013

Interviewer: Gill Young

Respondent: John Gray

Right, I think we are go

Testing, testing

[Laughs] yes, testing, testing. My name is Gill Young and we're at 149 Raybury St., and your name is?

John Gray and I stay in Raybury Street also, but I was born and bred in this area. Not born in the area ...

When were you born?

1931.

Right, and where were you born?

I must have known you were going to ask this; I was adopted, right, and I think your boys were adopted? Yes, I remember; and I was the third of a family – a different family – let me get that straight. I had a sister who was older, a brother who was older and myself - but we were not related. My father and mother adopted three kids from different – well, at that time it was very easy to adopt a child as there were plenty of kids around who, for whatever reason, had no mother sticking up for them. What my sister tells me and, actually, my sister-in-law has got stuff about where I came from and that kind of stuff; a place in Edinburgh and as I recollect I've got a copy of it somewhere; of mine and my brother's. I was born, well I don't exactly remember – well I couldn't – but it was some place out by Milngavie, Bearsden – a big country estate; and my sister always said to me that there was a girl working on the estate and she had a child to one of the workers on the estate (this was my sister telling me this) and it's in record anyway but my sister says, she said, "I wasnee having- it was the laird," You know, I can't remember what they call – anyway in any event so I was born.... My mother and father adopted me, so that's when I was born. And funnily enough those days it was relatively easy because there were so many kiddies around; and much later, and it was part of my background, as a Councillor I became for the region the first of the Councillors who were involved in adoption; we were the region for Adoption Case Committees. I was the Chair and another Councillor was the Chair for Glasgow division, right. There was a doctor, social workers, psychiatric people and so on and so forth – the file is made up of about five other people; and I chaired that. I was with that for a long time and it was an amazing experience. But it was not as easy to adopt then; now it's even less easy, and there's not so many babies to adopt now. A lot of the children who are being adopted now are older and have problems. At least I didn't have any problems; not till much later on when I



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seemed to catch every disease under the sun, you know. I was the kind of weak one of the family.

So there you are, and my father actually had been a soldier in the 1st World War and had been wounded; luckily enough it was the leg. So anyway, that was that. My mother worked; you know the two of them worked, but for a time he wasn't able. But that was before my time. As I remember him, he was a smashing; well the two of them was, although at times she was a wee bit crabby, you know [laughs] as I suppose mothers can be. [laughs]. My father worked in the night shift quite a bit, and in those days when the night shift work was finished, he might spend one or two weeks laid off with the men. That was one of the reasons my mother was working. Anyway he was a great guy and he used to take us – take me – as I say I was the youngest then, and that's what I remember as a wee boy – he took me for walks along the canal bank. Of course at that time that was a very very busy place. There was barges going up and down; there was two pleasure ships went up and down to Craig Marloch I think it was; and when they passed at night the lights were on, you know. I seen the Queen Mary going up and down [laughs].

My father was an amazing guy; he seemed to know everybody and as we were walking up he was chatting away, and they were talking away to me; so that was just one of those things; and then he was very very handy; he used to make furniture and stuff like that. He didn't sell it usually, he just gave it away. So that's that. And then later on when obviously I go to school and it was an all-state school, which is now not a school any longer. Then I went to St Georges Road School. Then my first job..

You said you were ill when you were a child? Did the doctor come to you? How did they cope with illnesses in those days?

Oh right. Oh well the family doctor came. Because some of things I had – I had measles, I had everything you can think of – I got stuck in the hospital on one or maybe two occasions. Then, well later on, I had a spot on my lung; I was convalescent; there used to be a Home down there; that was during the War; that was while Clydebank was getting bombed. I must have been about 10-11ish. I spent a couple of months there and that was actually a good experience, you know. I came out better in any event. But the experience down there, you know, - Oh, I've just remembered it, [ph.] Biggert Memorial Home, Prestwick Ayrshire. The nurse used to say, "That's how you address the letter when you're sending a letter home, or if you're sending a postcard." About now the airport just obliterated that, but I was in it during the War and the nurses, well at that time the bombers used to go there, and at this particular time I was there, there was Americans that were there. There was wire up all over it so you couldn't get in, and sometimes the nurses would say, "Don't... I was supposed to meeting Sergeant so-and-so, but I've got to work, bla bla bla; would you go to the rail and tell him!" Or the guys would say, "Tell Nurse Elizabeth that we've got something on tonight," you know. They were going to bomb somewhere. And of course that was, well the nurses and all of us would quiver, you know, because the guys were away. So that was quite an experience for a young boy, you know. I actually enjoyed the time down there and I was cured and home.

Then you came back to Glasgow?

Oh yes



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Where were you living at that time?

46 Ditch Street. I was there when I was adopted I was taken there by my mother and father and my brothers and sisters; my sister got married at that time I think; she was the oldest; so it was just Alec and myself until finally I got married and then I moved up to Roland Street for a period.

Who did you marry?

A lassie called Anne Campbell; but we were divorced a number of years back. This is the other interesting thing. We were in a single end in Roland Street; it was actually fine but there was a toilet in the stairs and all this stuff; and my mother died, she'd been ill, she had cancer. Well she was quite old for that time; she died and my brother took over the tenancy of her house. Some years later he got married and left the house; they moved up to Harrier Drive. They moved up there and the house was empty; so I'd gone to the factor to see if we could rent it, but he said, "No I'm afraid the house is for sale." So anyway we bought the house. I mean it was, I don't know, £500 or something which was a lot of money. So anyway, we bought the house; so that was me back in my old domain. Eventually anyway we parted company. We were down in Liverpool for a while and we both left the house; in Liverpool for a while and then we just parted company. That's when I was back in Woodlands Drive. So how's that?

Woodlands Drive, yes. Amazing! But how old were you then, when you came back to Woodlands Drive? Roughly?

Well, that would be – roughly I would have been – when did I come back? Well, hang on....

What jobs were you doing all this time? What work were you doing?

I was an electrician. I worked in too many places – it would take about 60 pages for that – Ah right, I came back – I was in Glasgow Corporation 1965-68 then we moved down to Liverpool, so at that time I'd be in my 30s, let's put it roughly; and then when I came back sometime later I was back in the Council again in 1972-75. I was in three councils; Corporation, Strathclyde and then the City Council, so I was 37 then.

So you were a Councillor. So how did you become a Councillor?

Well I was a member of the Labour Party for a long time and I worked for the Labour Party; and they asked people if they want to the members of the Candidate Panel. I was then on the Panel you see. I just had something about that in this, I just 1966 when I stood in my first local election for Glasgow Corporation; I was obviously still in the [sl. 14:46.3 sixty] then. Anyway we held an Election Meeting and it was in the school we've just been talking about and I addressed an audience consisting of my uncle, half a dozen neighbours from the same Close; anyway in '65 the school roll had fallen and the school was closed. I didn't win that election but I won the next time. The school was closed in '65 and as I say, I took a bit of stick for the closure of the school, you know.

And there were a lot of – well beginning to be ethnic minority communities coming into the area?



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There always was some; not a lot. That didn't start until maybe the '70s you know, in the quantities you're talking about. Then of course after that it was quite a place, you know, for people coming into it.

Specially this area?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, Oh aye, Oh aye.

When did Napiers Hall Street, I can't remember, when did it become the Language Centre? Was it around that time?

Well, when would it be? The School lay empty for quite a while; there was a number of suggestions about what should happen to it and I was very much involved actually; there was a Community Relations Council, I was a Councillor, and Ethnic Minorities, that sort of stuff. We had a discussion and it was decided – the Language Centre was somewhere before it came there

Washington Arts Centre

That's right yes. I don't know why, I think it became too small, or they wanted to move somewhere else; I've just got a note here, "Following discussions with education officials and myself, it was decided to move the Language Centre to Napiers Hall Street." By that time of course I was a convenor of a fairly important committee in the region – the Social Strategy Committee; I mean that's what everything was about – that particular organisation we had a lot of great officials and some very good Councillors, you know. And I was lucky in that, because I was Chair of that Committee. I was responsible for quite a lot of stuff, like Urban Aid, money, and so on and so forth; and I was well-liked; not saying I'm boasting but I was reasonably well regarded by people like Dick Stewart who was a Leader of the Council, and others; but I think I was doing not a bad job anyway. [laughs] So that was that. At that time, obviously, I was staying in Woodlands Drive.

So Napiers Hall Street was the Language Centre for a while?

Oh yes. Has been since – see I actually performed the Opening of the Language Centre; that's what this speech is about – where will I see the date? [pause] I don't quite – it must have been some time in the '70s when – anyway –

So what else were you doing at that time? As a Councillor you must have met a lot of people living round here? What kind of problems did they bring to you?

Oh god; Well [laughs] the major one because of what was happening, you know, a lot of the houses were being demolished and so on, was definitely up in that area; it needed to be because these were awful houses. I can give you some information about that, cos I've got stuff here, so

Where did the people go?



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Well, some of them went to Chapel, some of them went to Easter House; some of them went to Castle Row; that was the availability. Some actually went to my old town, but at that time these were the Schemes that were coming up.

So the houses changed. What about in your later childhood and things, what about the cinemas, and what did you do in your spare time?

Ah well; in your spare time you went to the cinema; I mean I didn't go to the football much; the other thing – my mother was quite, well she wasn't exactly religious, but she was quite keen that we were in things like the Boys' Brigade, and the Methodist Hall as it then was, it was a Church at the time, down below it had a fantastic kitchens and table tennis and various other things. So my brother and I went there, so that kind of thing; but the pictures – My mother was a great theatre-goer; not in the high class but the Empress, she used to go down there; it was a theatre down there at St Georges Cross. There's houses there now. My mother used to take me there to see the various shows; they were Variety Shows, Tommy Morgan and stuff like that. She also took me to the Pavilion and other theatres, you know; maybe King's and so on.

What about the Metropole?

The Metropole I think she took me to once. That was during the War, and Harriet Warder was singing in it. It was – this was during the War – an honourable guy, a Gorbals boy, had been killed in the War but had become a Victoria, he'd got the Cross; and it was a special concert given. I think it was to help his family, you know; and Harriet Warder was the main turn. Actually I didn't like her, but there you go! [laughs] I thought it was too much, you know, the Celts and stuff like that. So that was that. I loved the cinema; she loved the cinema as well

Where were the cinemas in this area?

Oh now there's the Seymour, just where I was talking about, down there. There was Brunswick at the corner of Glossop Street; I mean I'm busy reading some of this stuff; the Brunswick was at the top of Glossop Street and Maryhill Road; next to that was [ph. Croziers 23:30.8] – across the road from that was Croziers which was an ice cream shop. Up where the Holme is, up the road you know, is Park Holme, there was a picture house there called the Star, and at Brae Darman there was a picture house called the Roxy; and then the next one was the Rio at Baersterne which is where I got my first job as a message boy incidentally; and then further on than that in Mulgaer there was a picture house called the Douglas. Then of course there was the Astoria off Purcell Road; I think that was reckoned to be the second biggest picture house in Glasgow; then there was two other small picture houses besides that.

So what did you see? What films did you enjoy?

Och, well, as I got older; but when my mother took me it was Shirley Temple and stuff like that [laughs] there were others I know but I just remember Shirley Temple. She was an amazing woman cos she read voraciously and the public library used to be next to the Community Central Halls, well you know that line of shops there; one of these was a library called The Step In Library. You paid for your books, you know; a shilling or something like that; and there was another one up the road, just about Bank Street. Anyway my mother – my point being that she had a fall, broke her leg and was never



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quite as mobile, you know; well she was getting on a bit. So I used to go and get her books and I got a couple for myself. But when I was a kid when I look back over time, my mother and father were always buying me books, and my brothers, you know what I mean and my sister. In my primary school, sometimes just before school as well as in holiday and stuff like that, times were easy, so the teacher would ask you to bring in a book; and I used to have the best books [laughs]. The teacher would read stories, and whether the story was in the book, I don't know, but just..... so I'm an avid reader myself; I took after my mother and father, you know, so it's kind of genetic [laughs]. My brother and my sister, they were all into books you know; I was, um the mention of this, but across the other side of the road, talking about books, one of the shops there was called The Leisure Hour and it was a bookshop. It was all second-hand stuff; but it was all the paperback stuff and it was all the famous paperback stuff that's still around.

Mills and Boon?

No, no, we never touched those! No, hell's bells – Penguin! So they had loads of Penguin books of the different colours, and others, comics, the lot; and you could go in and buy a book and then you could take it back and you'd get another one. Actually I think my brother and myself could have made up our own library of books cos it was a whole range of stuff, absolutely fantastic; different books and comics and so on, so forth. Unfortunately of course, when the place was demolished; nothing was saved but the pub, that was it as well you know. It was a great shop.

What about the pubs? As you grew up and you went to pubs, what pubs were round here?

Oh god, wait a minute [laughs].

Was The Pewter Pot here?

No, no. When I was just a boy The Pewter Pot was a paper shop and the next part of it was a house that then – there was a big [ph. Stramash] actually when the paper – my brother used to get his paper there when he was going to his work he would get his papers there; sometimes he'd ask me to get the Sunday paper and I would go into that shop and everybody, it was a very busy shop but then of course everybody was buying their fags there as well, on their way to work. Where he was at that time, the subways was loaded with guys going to the shipyards you know, and so on and so forth; the Great Western Road people was going to Singers – it was a busy shop anyway. The tenants, I think it was, bought the thing and then he was turfed out; but they did get an alternative shop, in Garethmore Road; there was the tenement buildings there as well; and they got a shop there but it was a smaller shop. I think the poor guy died some time later because he felt he'd been done, you know. So that was that.

What other pubs were there – what about the Woodside Inn?

The Woodside Inn was Wilsons for years, a family place. Wilsons had three pubs in the City; there was one in Briars Road; there was a couple of pubs, well then you had The Pewter Pot, but before that there was two pubs whose names I've forgotten, between Garethmore Road and Carrick Tartan Street I think it was; then there was another pub just up near Mount Street. But then you had pubs, you had the Tram Car Vaults just



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across Maryhill Road; you had the Abingdon Bar; I mean there were so many pubs; I think I've got a list of them here somewhere, let me come across that...

You mentioned trams; where did the trams go when they were running?

Where did they go?

Yeah, I mean which roads?

Well they went up Maryhill Road; the ones that were going up Maryhill Road were going to Springburn and Mulgae; they went to Mulgae; Maryhill – Mulgae. And of course on the way down they were going to – oh one of the trams used to go to out Hamden way, Sinclair Drive. Another one went out East as the buses do now; you know they followed basically what the buses do now. Then, of course, Great Western Road trams were running – well further – well where the buses go up – yes the trams used to go as far as the Canal, out Great Western Road. In fact they went past that, they went up to Nightswood and some of them went up into North Farrow and Clevedon Road, the one before India and they turned round, you know. So there were quite busy anyway.

There weren't many cars early on?

Oh no, no, no. Well it must be, I think I was the first guy to have a car [laughs]. Well I remember it well; I loved it.

What was it?

It was a 1934 – it was nearly as old as me! – a 1934 Austin Ten – lovely wee car it was. [laughs]

Black?

Aye, well you could have any colour as long as it was black [laughs]. So there you go.

So what did you find most interesting about your work as Councillor? That must have taken you to all sorts of places.

Oh it did

All sorts of homes

Yeah, yeah. Och well I remember – well Roland Street where we stayed; this is after I'd come back from Liverpool when I was on the Council again; and Roland Street, that was then given [33:57.7-34:00] – that was another one and at night, well we did a surgery - John Ross and I - I was the Region and he was the District Councillor at that stage. We had, it was like doctor's surgery every Thursday over there with folk.

Where was your surgery?

Over in the Central Halls, when it was the Methodist Church, right. We did the surgeries there and the place was very full. It was busier than the doctor's surgery, it was. It was all about when they were going to get the house, where it was going to be, all this stuff, and sometimes when you got an indication, which wasn't often, but sometimes you'd get



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an indication that somebody was going to get a house, you say, "Well is it OK if I go and tell them that something's going to happen?" "Oh yes well the letter will be coming," you know; so at night time in these areas, Roland Street being one, Penarth Street being another; well, a number in fact. Of course street lighting wasn't up yet; some of the houses were nearly empty, well only a few people left; the places was full of rats; you know, I'm just describing the same thing [laughs]. Anyway, I'm getting it to you; one example was I was up Roland Street this night, up the Close to tell this woman that she would soon be getting a house. So I go up the stairs; the place is black, the Close lighting's off; there's 3 people left and they're still in the building and there's rats scurrying about the stairs – oh dear [laughs] – so anyway I go up the stairs and I'm going to this door; it was a first landing, and there's somebody on the other side of the other door, you know; they come over and I was afraid, I tell you that, cos you weren't sure what was going to happen.

Anyway it was Sister Julie, who used to stay up the road there, you remember Sister Julie, an amazing, amazing wee woman you know, but a pain the backside I'll tell you about that in a minute; I said "Oh, good God, what are you doing here at this time of night, woman?" you know, "Oh well," she says, "This poor woman's not well and there's kiddies," you know, very proper; you know she was the Head Teacher of St Charles's; so that was a laugh. However the woman where I was going opened her door, you know, and I told her, "Look, you'll be getting word shortly," and that was all; I was off and Sister Julie was actually taking candles up to this kiddie who I think was one of her pupils. So we went down the stairs, I think she'd a car at that point, I can't remember, but she'd away in her car back to the Nuns' place. She was an amazing amazing woman, and of course the other thing was that the School that was St Columbus, the School down there was now gone of course, was a bit of a pit because it was going downhill fairly quickly; because it was at a kilter, cos a load of the Catholic families sent their kids to Potterdown, well the ones that were smarter if you like; and the others to the school just beside – I don't know if you worked in this school – you know the school in Down Hill

St Aloysius?

No, no, god no, it's a primary, primary school, up there – Garnet Bank – now is that the one you were at?

Yes

Well there was a Catholic primary school up there as well, somewhere up there. So it was like Notre Dame. They both used to be fee paying, that's right, then the Council stopped that. But that was where the small lasses went and I remember saying – I was up in their office, I used to visit there often about, maybe, a constituent you know, and I was up in their office one time and I says, "Look Sister Julie, if you're going to send..." What she did was she sent the boys to Hill Ed [laughs]; it's where they send – well some of the boys went there, but the others, the girls no way were they going there; and a lot of the boys, well – let's put it this way – the brighter kids she wasn't going to send them to that school, whether they were boys or girls. But the point was the school was out of kilter as far as boys and girls were concerned; hardly any lasses in the places; and I would visit quite often and I says, "Look Sister Julie, why don't you send your girls to that..?"



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"Councillor Gray, under no circumstances will any of my girls go to that school!"

Motts Hill Ed? St Columbus?

No, no. And I said, "Sister Julie, it's one of your schools, you know,"

"Nevertheless, no way!"

End of story, you know [laughs]. So there you go. And it was, well, partly because of the setup it became a bit of a – well, some of the kids that went there were kind of tough; well parents were sending their kids to other schools if they could, quite frankly. Eventually anyway, the school had to be closed. For me, actually I was one of the things myself; and one of the women who was in the Arts Department of the Education Department, she kind of had a shine for that school, and she wanted to do things; but actually, at the end of the day, the school had more projects than it had pupils and of course eventually somebody said, "Well, Government Aid money," you know, and it was Government Aid money so we got away with it. So it was very sad actually, and it has to be said that some of the head teachers – I mean one of them, I can't remember, the poor guy'll be dead now, - he used to lock himself in his room at times [laughs]; but one of the times I was visiting him about 9 o'clock and they're all of them just up to the school, and "Would you care for a drink, Councillor?" [laughs], I said, "No thanks, it's too early in the morning." [laughs]. But the poor guy, it was just the strain of the place, and he had been actually a very good bloke, but just cracked up; and two or three of them went that way.

But St Joseph's was running, and the Church was there too at that time

Oh aye, aye, that was quite a good school, Oh yeah, oh yeah. It's still there, I believe, and old Groke's still there.

But all the grade square building, when did that happen?

Oh that would be the late '60s-'70s period, aye.

About the same as

Well probably before this, aye a bit before this, cos when I was Councillor 1972-75, and then 1975-95 they'd started building but probably before '72 and up to '75 in that particular area; because at the time, when I was a Councillor, they were multi-storeys, you know, and I visited all the housing there. There was a lot of problems with the multi-storeys; dampness and stuff like that.

Where did people who went to the multi-storeys, where did they come from?

Well some of them actually came from within the area as things were getting demolished, some of them moved in. Others came from maybe quite near the area but not absolutely in that area, because they had a big massive clearance up there, you know.

What about Partick Thistle? What about football?



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Well that was my Team and again, one of the things that happened there was the councillors for the area and the MP was on a desktop there – Mullareed, and his mother was a Faro, the Reed family ran the club for a long time; Mullareed was the son, obviously; his father had died and his mother was really – she was really a queen if you like, you know. Mullareed, the boy was actually the Chair of the club, he was a nice boy, but his mother was kind of the boss, you know. That was the other thing, during the game at half-time – before the game even – we were round at the Director’s for a cup of coffee, half-time you’d the pie and beans as well [laughs], and his mother entertained the ladies in her place. The men weren’t allowed in there, you know [laughs], so it was quite something. Well, the women, that’s right, Jean McFadden who was one of my colleagues, Jean and I were talking one day in the chambers as they were playing Celtic up there, and Jean said, “Would you like to go to the game, John?” and I said, “Well, if you’re going to be in the Director’s box at half-time it’s very strict segregation. It’s alright when you’re watching the game, but before the game you’ll need to be in the room with Mrs – forgot what her name was.” And Jean was, “Oooh”, so she didn’t go to the game! [laughs] She wasn’t having this segregation stuff! [laughs]

So have you any more, cos I’ve got stuff here that I want to tell you!

So what are you particularly wanting to share?

Well, a number of things, OK? Right. Well I’ve touched on – OK the first bit I touched on was the Language Centre, so we’ll leave that. The next thing, this is actually like all the speeches that I made about things, which maybe puts a date on things, so

This is Hopeville Road, the opening of houses up there by Queens Cross Housing Association.

When did Queens Cross start? I mean where did they come from?

Well that was to do with all the stuff about the motorway and so on. There was an Action Group set up that used to be in the Community Central Halls, and it would be somewhere in the early '70s Queens Cross became Queens Cross Housing Association; I can’t remember exactly, but round about early 70s.

And when you said you used to go to the Methodist place, when did it change to Maryhill Community Centre?

Oh I’ve got stuff in here which I’ll let you know, OK. Can I go through the next thing? OK so this was 9th December 1994 and this was opening the houses up in Horcall Road and.... Oh here we are, Queens Cross formed in 1976, right, Queens Cross Action Group was involved in that; so this is, it’s just telling you about the agencies involved in this. Anyway, I’ll go through this quickly, this is it:

“I’m delighted to be asked to open this Development in Horcall Road today. This represents a further enhancement of the Woodside area. It is within living memory that Woodside was the most populated area in Europe. The Gorbals is to claim the credit for that.” Anyway, that was way over to them, but never mind!

“Facts and figures for 1959 published by the Corporation of Glasgow. The Woodside Parliamentary Constituency made up of Woodside, North Kelvern and Park East Ward,



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had an electorate of 44,746. Woodside Ward had an electorate of 14,071." This we were told in 1994. Presley, my regional area, has 18,000 of an electorate. My original area was made up of Woodside, North Kelfern and Park East. The housing from 1940s until 1970 was vastly different in Woodside Ward. There were plates on the doors denoting the numbers allowed to reside within these properties. Say in a semi – I don't remember the word they used for it, but they were certainly ready for being demolished and stuff like that but they couldn't do it in the borough cos they didn't have houses to put anybody in. So they were limited to the number of adults and so there was plates on the door which would say something like, "Two and a half adults; four and a half adults," but some of the houses had about ten in them, you know. That was wooden lobbies, and toilets in the stairs, that sort of thing, if there was a toilet in the stairs; because some of the places were in such a state there was only one toilet for everybody up the stairs as well; and that's the scary place.

So, "Number assigned to apartment houses 1,360; 2 apartments 3,952; 3 apartments 1,201.

Total 7,192. That shows you the density in that area.

4 apartments 387; 5 and over, 282.

So there we are, and I've just got a wee note there, "No hot water, and outside toilets."

Many of the houses were considerably overcrowded; Horcall Road itself was mainly tenement buildings with some shops. There was a doctor's surgery; a Dairy, a paper shop on the right as you come up and on the left was Cameron Street; situated there was a Public Washrooms; there were also Swimming Baths. They're still there as a matter of fact, and other washroom facilities in Moncrieff Street. Cumpert Down Street was a Police Station. Hall Bank School also stood at Bath Street, and of course St Colombo. The area had two secondary schools; three primary schools; two chapels; five churches; one cathedral. That's the whole of the Woodside area in total. Various other religious establishments; three model lodging houses; eight picture houses, I think I mentioned some of them; several factories, Sterns, Wardells, R.S. McCalls; they were up in North Woodside Road; City Bakeries; that was the biggest ones. And then of course the other side was Wardells, the big meat processing plant, which is that open space that we've got there. OK. For such a highly populated area – by the way I wrote this all myself [laughs], sometimes you get them written for you, but if I can get the information I prefer to, anyway – For such a highly populated urban area; the state names were evocative of the country, but I'm straight; Lilac Place; Cedar Street; Myrtle Street; Draco Street; Oakbank Street; Cross Burns Street. The place in St Joseph's, that's the Chapel, in the 1960s, was in his late 70s or he must have been over that; anyway, he used to be, you know, the Education used to have their local representatives on the Education Committee, and Alec was, he was on the Education Committee. He said his childhood memories told him an orchard and farm were on the route Cross Burns; this shows you the tremendous changes in the area, particularly in the last 30 years or so. His mate, well the other Minister, his church was out opposite – oh he was in Black Hill, that was it; Black Hill Church, the Minister; they were both on the Education Committee; they were great characters when you were having lunch together it was hilarious. But the guy in that area, he said, you know, any time there was a robbery or something in the inner



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city, "Oh my people all get turned over!" [laughs], cos well that was what the place was like, wasn't it.

Well anyway, Queens Cross Housing Association are to be congratulated – I was doing this as a Councillor at the time – on their achievement in Horcall Wood, as are all that have been involved in the development."

So that's just a wee bit

Fascinating

Just a wee bit. So you've got that on record now haven't you? So lots of the other stuff is equally as fascinating.

So many changes; what are the changes that you really regret?

Well, most of that stuff had to go. The changes I regret in what's happened, yeah Raybury Street, Henderson Street, you know that's my particular area. I was OK with something reasonable in its place; I mean it could have been a hospital or it might just have been lying derelict for years; there's some parts of the city are, you know. So I think what's been developed since Queens Cross Housing Association, and the other housing associations, if it hadn't been for them half of the rest of the place would have been falling to bits. So that's it, and I think again, you learn that sometimes the big operation isn't the best way to do things, particularly – well, the time I'm talking about, this so-called motorway, planning people, City Engineer and how many others were absolutely set on having that motorway; they were running up and down and merry hell to get that; but we thankfully stopped that, you know. Yeah and with a fight we did get that stopped. A lot of the junior officials were coming and saying, "Look John, we need to try and get some more houses here, otherwise..." So they were, the younger guys were OK but the Directors at times were just pig-headed and they wanted to do this or whatever. So that's that bit there.

What about – I'm also interested in the ethnic minority communities; Chinese communities; other communities coming in. I mean some families originally, but maybe students later, how did that impact on your work?

Well, it did and it didn't. Some of them took everything coming [59:25.7 inaudible because of crackling on tape to 1:00:00]

So I moved around in the community and I think eventually a lot of the communities were quite pleased to go and see their Councillor, I thought so. So that was that.

Did they have their own Councillors?

Well aye, a couple of folk became Councillors; I mean a number of folk have been Councillors from them.

One other thing, this is a brief one, the Farr Hill complex, which is again, I'll tell you the story about this; but this is the opening of it. The guy, Tiny Hawton – I don't know if you know him – have you heard of Tiny? Well he was a big Tiny, he was 6ft 9", you know? Smashing big bloke. Well he, the Leader of the Council says, "John," he says, "Tiny



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Hawton," he'd retired as a referee, he was a lawyer, I think, but he was doing a job for an organisation, a quango of sorts for the government, which was about setting up things like the Farr Hill complex; so Tiny comes in and he says, "John, I've got a bag of cash and I can't get rid of it. Will you take it from me?" And I says, "What's this all about?" So he told me that there was quango, he was the Chair here, and it was about getting things like the Farr Hill complex tied into Football Clubs; and so he said, "I've tried Celtic and they don't want it; I've tried Queens Park and they don't want it," and who else had he tried; he'd tried Rangers and they jumped at it. They got the first. So I said, "So you're coming to Farr Hill last, are you?" I was kidding him on. And he says, "Well what do you think the chances would be there?" and I says, "Well, I don't really know, but it could be a good idea." I said, "Well I'll talk to all of them about it," I said, "Listen, what does it entail?" and he said "Well it mean a Football Trust," that's what his quango was; the amount of money they put in to it, £125,000; Partick Thistle had to put in money; they put in £30,000; Glasgow Development Agency £250,000; Glasgow Health Board £16,500; so you see the whole urban programme £444,924; that was the first bit and then the second bit was £159,000; Strathclyde Regional Council £175,000. So that's what that cost and that's what the urban cost; and Queens Park, Celtic – well it's taken Celtic to get a place – it also took Rangers years to get that place that they've got, though they did go in for that. So it's literally that was the only club that they could get. They tried nearly every club in Scotland. That was that, so Rangers first of all. So then, I'm saying here – this was the opening of it:

"Councillor [ph. Hale McInhough started it with the Eyebrook's Trust] and now with this multi-purpose facility, which is six months has been an operation that's been well-used, I'm particularly pleased to welcome primary school kids, and particularly Kilburn Primary – that was a special school – is using it for some of the time. Last month the Social Work Department North-West Area had a Sports Day for the disabled. Everyone remarked on the excellence of the complex. It's been a great place actually, altogether." That was when they come up, after

What's it consist of?

Well there's football pitches and then there's the indoor stuff which is badminton, you know, games like that; masses of games for all; and the gymnastics hall there; so it's a great place. Come in and have a look at it sometime. I mean you can rent the hall. There have been a wide range of facilities initiated by Strathclyde region such as Community Central Hall days to support the elderly; the Family Centre in Rock Hill has recently completed a Drop-in Centre for in Rock Hill; that's different, that's part of other things I was involved in. Hallworth housing provided by the District Council, who also provided such facilities as the Woodside Baths, Leisure Hall and Halls. The Baths are out of commission at the minute; they'll all be spending money. The area is a really desirable area to be in, I'm proud of our partnership with the statutory bodies is most important.

So generally a former Director of Planning in Glasgow District Council. I used to talk about a string of pearls that was happening in the city [laughs]. I think that in [1:06:30.1] in Merry Hill we have a cluster of diamonds we should be proud of today. So that's that there. So I mean, you've got that now haven't you.

When they knocked down, - I'm always curious about how long Taggarts has been there – because when they knocked down the tenements they initiated



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this tenement painting. I know that the phoenix bird was actually drawn by one of our pupils. But has Taggarts been there for a long time?

No, that's another apartment was there before Taggarts. Not that, no, there was – Disciple Halls was there, and then there was another outfit behind that, whose name I've forgotten, but they used to repair taxis; and I was behind that, but they didn't have as much ground as what's there now, so houses and/or some of the factory stuff that was up North Hill Road were demolished. So the only good thing about that there is that at least they took over a bit of that ground and it's tidied up and OK it's better like than what it was. For a while there was an adventure playground there, I don't know if you know about that, but that wasn't terribly popular; again, I was involved. There was a young lassie who looked after it; she was a quite bright youngster; but people just didn't like it, you know. I mean yesterday when I went over The Gorbals, I suppose you know about that, the folk singer used to go down over there – that was a great one. Actually I thought that was a great idea, but you did have to have people around to make sure that the kids were safe, you know. Anyway, it lasted for a wee while. But on the whole it was probably one of the better things that happened. That place – the adventure playground wasn't a bad idea, but some people just can't go there, you know; and it was actually the lady who was the President down there, she was from Stevens – she was Stevens Shipyard's wife; you know the guy? Steven Shipyard – they're pretty wealthy people, you know.

So I'll go on to the next bit then, which is fairly general.

Yes, yes. I don't want you to lose your voice; we could do a second session somewhere else.

1940 my brother Alec took me to see 'Gone with the Wind' [laughs] in the (1:10:04.2) well that was a long time ago. And it was quite funny, the [1:10:12.6 s.l.] was at Cossack Street, it was ... that was the first time. When it first came it was only the bigger ... it wasn't out in the sticks as I recall it and it came there, and Alec took me to see it. It was quite funny, well he was working obviously; I was still young. When we got there, there was this massive queue; the folk moved in and then some people were turned away 'cos the place was full but my brother [laughs] was a wee bit [1:10:56.9] ... well I was a bit feared back then but my brother used to – in those days the guys ...you know, you used to have a guy with a uniform and a hat and all that so I used to [1:11:07.0 s.l.] let them have the spat a Japanese Admiral or something; but the picture places had then even. So Big Nicky was his name and he said, 'stay about here somewhere'; his sister was one of the usherettes – all these things were local kind of things, you know. Anyway, so Alec says to him – the big fella, "Are you sure there might not be a couple of seats somewhere?" and [laughs] he goes like that. So Alec gives him a couple of bob or something, you know [laughs] So that's how I saw Gone with the Wind, you know! [laughs] Well we didn't get in for nothing, but we didn't have to pay in there as well. So there I was, there's just that wee note at the top.

So, I'm going through this very quickly. I was born in 1931, well I've told you that; lived in this area most of my life except for a three year spell in Liverpool. I went to Napiers Hall Street School and in the 1960s stood as a candidate for the Council. I spoke at a meeting in the school; I've already told you that; I brought my uncle and four or five neighbours and two or three others. I didn't win the election. The school I went to after



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that was St Georges Secondary – this is an opportunity for to take a walk down Memory Lane. If you think I've missed anything, this is what I was I was telling you earlier; it's something I've already said. If you think I've missed anything, just let me know. Some of this is random memories.

As a boy my father used to take me for walks along the canal bank. The canal was busy and carried all sorts of merchandise down and the Locks had men on them who manually wound them up so the boats could go through, and there were many businesses on the canal. At Maryhill there were many shops; ice cream shops, butchers, bakers, fruit shops – I'll show you some pictures in a minute – grocers, cafes, pubs and I've got a list of the pubs here; I can read that out if you like. The side streets also had shops; Bridley Street had about a dozen shops; different types of shops – newsagents, and there were a painters' shop – the painters' union had a place at one of the shops – I've forgotten [1:14:29.0]. Over there, see where by the front doors, all of them were shops at one time; then the shops – well people moved away when the shops weren't paying; then the here at Queens Cross, or whoever owned the property before, turned these into empty houses; so that's the kind of development of that. The newsagent off next to the side of the road with the Hunder Road – a 100-acre old dairy; opposite was a newsagents next to the Pewter Pot; we've already touched on that. This was the Leisure Hour bookshop where you could swap or buy books and comics. That was one of the things – well I used to read The Dandy and The Beano, The Rover and The Wizard – well this place where you could get it; you could even get the [1:15:28.8], you know. I don't know, well you might have known all this; but during the War when the Americans, they had the Liberty Bullets coming over the stuff to here; and they used American comics as ballast; I only found that out a few years back; and well, they gave it to the newsagents. I don't think anybody had to pay for them; but that's how he got his American comics, and some of the American comics, of course, to us were absolutely mad; they were like big newspapers. So that's what I'd read.

So where were we, what was I talking about? Across Maryhill Road you'd Stern Engineering Works, that's up a side road; there was a Joiners; a chocolate factory and a kind of model Lodging House. Let me see; I've mentioned St Joseph's Chapel; Napiers Hall Street School; there's a which was Wardells Factory; the place where it was is now open ground. Myrtle Street, Brackers Street, all demolished and new housing built; going up Maryhill Road – here are the shops on either side; then a Mackintosh church; Furhill Road – you see, Shaun McInnes Ironworks was up there, and other small works by the canal. I should mention really the Central Halls, formerly a church; now run for the community by the community. I know I've just mentioned that for some time there was an adventure playground, now Taggarts. Oh aye, 1960s Maryhill Barracks closed as a barracks; and Alec who was an electrician with the Corporation then was sent up to the Barracks to make sure all the electricity was safely disconnected in all the different places; myself and all my friends were up there making sure all the electricity services were cut off, cos it was going to be demolished wasn't it – the place, eventually. So we went in all the different parts of the place – it was fantastic – the Officers' Mess had a dance floor; so you could see who was the gradations of the big boys and who was the wee boys, you know [laughs]; and the Barracks themselves were quite amazing.

I mentioned Stephenson's, yes Gareth Hill Road, Stephenson's Memorial Docks down to the Park before there was a mill yard there; you probably heard about that; but when I was around there it was actually in operation. They used to have the big piles the stones



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that they broke up; they broke these things up and sent the dust to another place where it was processed to make dishes and stuff like that, you know. So there's that, you know.

Did the lorries come up that incline from the park? From the Mill up underneath the Church Bridge?

Aye, horses and carts. But that was the other thing; I don't know if I mentioned, I was going to mention that; the subway station down at Kilnbridge, that used to be a coal yard. Trains used to come in there and they dumped the coal; then somebody bagged it and the coalmen went down that road to load the trucks; well it was horses and carts then. You'll see a bit as you go down to the subway there's a part of it over where you have big sets you know; a load of bricks; that was for the horses pulling when they were coming up the hill loaded, that was a kind of surface that helped them get the cart up. It was amazing the way these things worked. So that's just about that.

Well, there's a list of pubs if you want it, and picture houses. The last bit...

So you said about the coal yard where the underground was; when was that underground created?

Oh gosh, way back in the 1900s sometime; it's quite an old one. I think it's kind of the sector of the oldest in the world, or in Britain; oh aye.

It must have made a great impression.

Oh aye, oh aye. I'll leave that with you, that was just local stuff that I picked up [shuffling papers] – anyway just a bit about the Community Central Halls, because I was very involved in that. To be honest, the Church was not the best of people to be doing business with! There's this letter, basically I'm sending out to people to say that "Negotiations for the sale of Methodist Hall are now completed. The Hall is now under the ownership of Strathclyde Regional Council. The operation and management of the new Community Centre will be by you as the local Management Committee."

What date was that?

That was 1977, 20th March; I've a file that size on this.

"The purpose of this letter is to invite you to a meeting in the above Hall on Friday 25th March at 7.30 to set up sub-committees, open a bank account, make sure we have somebody supervising the place and so on and so forth, and to elect a Management Committee." So that's what that letter's about. There's a lot of names there, my god. This is another situation; "I think it might be useful to remember how this all started. You will know that we have now completed a few of the social strategies – that's the Regional Council – and there is a sense in which the original strategy started here. (that was at the Methodist Hall), cos that was the first Urban Aid project in Maryhill." I've looked through my files on the Hall to remind myself of the evening which led to the Community Central Hall becoming a Community Centre. For some time Councillor John Ross and I had used the room in the hall for weekly surgeries. Terry Clements, the Minister at that time was about to move on because we were obviously taking over the place.



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At that time the area was devastated by demolition of buildings that was taking place all around and a working party composed of myself, Eileen Thompson who became Chairperson, representatives of groups using the hall, was set up. That was the working committee. Geoff Shaw visited the hall and said, "We must get this beautiful hall for the community, John." Our Geoff, he was a great guy. Anyway, on 18th March 1976 an Urban Aid application was made in order to enable us to buy the hall and pay staff to do the necessary repairs and allow for revenue costs. The hall was bought for £55,000 which must have been quite a bit of money in those days; I dread what it would cost now! It was to be managed by local community representatives. It was an act of faith both by the Regional Council and the local people, given the state of the area at that time. Other Urban Aid applications were made for future improvements to the building, plus a Youth Work Team. It should be underlined, however, that Strathclyde Region has financed the project through mainline funding, since 1981.

So the Region were very good with that. But it was seen as a kind of a – what would you say – a beginning. It was the first major Urban Aid project of its kind that the Region had been involved with, and in April 1977 Urban Aid was approved and we took over the hall on 1st April. Eileen Thompson and I met Jimmy Gordon, the caretaker, and he showed us round the place, which looked enormous [laughs]. Eileen said, "Good god! How are we going to fill this place?" And wee Jimmy, he was an amazing, amazing guy, says, "You know John, they've taken everything away except the phone." [laughs] He said, "The phone's no bloody good to us, but they kept it." They'd kept some pots and pans and stuff like that, but there weren't a stick of furniture in the place; I'll tell you a wee bit about that [laughs]. In the event, when you see what we have to do, I needn't have worried, you know. The Working Party became a Steering Committee and then the first Management Committee was formed. The first member of staff was the caretaker and we later sent a letter of appointment to Jimmy. I can't remember what he was getting as a wage then, but I think we all but trebled it, you know, because it was an absolute – even in these days it was – the wee guy worked his plate off –

Anyway, I became the Chair and Eileen Thompson became the first Development Officer, that's right, and I became Chair of the Management Committee. Some of the original group are still involved; this is when I'm writing then, which was a good wee while ago, I don't know that there are that many of them around now.

Some of the older ones have had to give up because they were getting too old. I think, yeah, that was the Management. Some of our original group are still involved and we had a great deal of assistance from Ian Robertson on building matters; he was an architect. His brother was a lawyer, Andrew Robertson. He's the Chair of the Health Boards, you know, a great guy – two great guys. Andrew helped us with legal matters. I think the main ingredients in the success story have been the stability of management, of the Management Committee. They're a good lot of people; they're quite old-time; quality staff; consistent support by the Regional Council and by Officers of the Council. So this was the first chink of light in a benighted area. The creation of the Community Halls was seen forward by the creation of the Maryhill Corridor Social and Housing Area which was a partnership between the Regional District Council, Special Housing Association, local housing associations and the local community. The result of this was extra teachers in schools; community workers; general ability through Urban Aid to aid the social fabric of the area and community centres in Gerbreith, Rockhill and Somerston. Facilities for elderly and disabled were provided; aye we didn't do too badly; also new



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housing through the District Council in particular the Housing Association, were provided. Central Hall, through their core staff, were providing a base for many activities and groups; it was also helping the development of service provided to groups such as the elderly and disabled and children; and projects such as the After-School Care staff; Nursery; Elderly Care Scheme; high-class Youth Work. Princes Trust was of course involved in that as well; I was involved with them for a while; other means including voluntary work has provided work training for literally hundreds of people. Universities and colleges use it for placement of staff. So it's done well. There have been major improvements to the building over the years since it became a Centre, and all of these managed by a local committee.

One of the first decisions as committee, was no matter the upheaval, the disturbance, the building would never be closed to the community when work was being carried out. This was difficult to achieve, but it has been done. Today the development of the North Wing – this is what this was about and I knew was being opened up – will allow more use of the Centre and will provide space for staff; the 46 Club; After-School care; Day Care for the Elderly; Gingerbread; Frozen Pike and other societies, a Travellers' project this project and Maryhill Young Persons' Befriending Service. So that was all the things that were being carried out. Finally there's a list of the architects; the guys that were helping, like Davy Anderson with the Education; Derek Aynow who's the Secretary for a long time; caretakers and cleaners. Quite a story – quite amazing, I think. I'm quite amazed at actually how well we did with that thing.

There's a few photographs

Wonderful, oh wonderful

Maryhill, I'm leaving them with you to have a look at them. I got them out of some of the books, you know.

Maybe some time I could photocopy these?

Well I'll get them photocopied for you. Aye.

Wonderful. Well listen, we've been at it for about two hours. We could maybe have another session some time. This is amazing, amazing.

So it's OK then, aye!

Absolutely fantastic!

Transcript ends 1:34:29.7