

THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

Elizabeth McLeister interviews ALEX WORKMAN, born 1910, at his home near Cullybackey. He talks about working as a Stone Breaker in Cullybackey Quarry and then working at Morton & Simpsons (Pork). He recalls a visit to Canada and reminisces about his school-days at the Craigs School, as well as attending local dances. Alex also remembers threshing and his father using a hand flail. Recorded on 6th April 2001.

[00:00:00.00] Alex Workman: A had a good life, A had a hard life but A enjoyed it - A've been very happy ye know wi the life A had but...

[00:00:10.04] A went tae school at seven before we started schuil, an then A quet at fourteen.

[00:00:18.27] An A worked tae the farmers fur a guid while, an then A went...

[00:00:24.19] The first ither job A had wus workin tae ma Uncle Wullie-John, workin in a quarry, wheelin stones tae the stane-breaker.

[00:00:35.04] Elizabeth: That wus sore work.

[00:00:36.02] Alex Workman: That wus sore work - it wus hard work.

[00:00:38.29] That's whar the' had... that's whar the stane-breaker wus. It wus jaist stones, like a quarry, ye know, but it wusnae a quarry.

[00:00:47.29] It wus a heavy, heavy job fur a fourteen yeir oul.

[00:00:51.14] Elizabeth: Yer father worked hard too, all his life.

[00:00:53.08] Alex Workman: Ma father wus a hard-workin man too, all his life.

[00:00:56.07] He worked, he uist tae work in the Maine Works, an then he worked, he jaist laboured after that.

[00:01:03.25] He worked a whole lot tae Wullie-John.

[00:01:07.22] Elizabeth: And he had... he got his han hurt didn't he?

[00:01:10.19] Alex Workman: He wus in the Maine Works at this time, an he wus dryin cloth wi big rollers - big warm rollers, ye see, an the'd hae burnt ye,

[00:01:20.02] so his han caught in between the two rollers an it burnt all the sinews aff the beck o his han

[00:01:27.01] an the' wantit tae take it aff in the 'ospital but he wudnae let them an...

[00:01:31.09] He wus able tae shave wi a cut-throat razor an he haed no uise o...

[00:01:38.17] He cudnae uise his fing'rs, jaist the thumb... an he uist tae...

[00:01:42.11] A uist tae watch him shavin. He put the razor in thair, in between the thumb an that thair, an thair's the way he shaved.

[00:01:50.10] Elizabeth: Well then after that you got another job, didn't you?

[00:01:52.27] Alex Workman: A got this job in Morton an Simpson's, in the Pork Store an A wus in the pork business then fur over thurtie yeirs.

[00:02:01.13] Elizabeth: Oh. And what wus it, had you to slaughter the pork or wus it jaist curin it?

[00:02:07.16] Alex Workman: No, we wur jaist curin the pork in Morton an Simpson's.

[00:02:10.18] It wus killed... The farmers killed it, ye see, an then they brought it in on thair horse an carts thair

[00:02:16.20] An we cut it up an cured it, sent it nearly all tae Ing'lan.

[00:02:22.14] The hams went tae Scotlan, all the hams went tae Scotlan, an the bacon went tae Ing'lan.

[00:02:29.19] Elizabeth: Times have changed terribly. What wus school like in your day, Alex...?

[00:02:34.28] Alex Workman: Ah, school wus all right in them days.

[00:02:36.17] Elizabeth: What school wus it you went to?

[00:02:37.20] Alex Workman: It wus The Craigs, I went tae The Craigs School, up the line thonner, ye know.

[00:02:43.20] Daisy Magowan, ye dinnae mine her, naw? An an oul boy, T.R. Robysin, he wus the Mastèr.

[00:02:53.24] He used tae... If ye haed 'a' done anythin, he hut ye like this over the side o the head wi his han wi a ring on it, ye know. Oh he did that.

[00:03:01.03] Ay, that's jaist the way he jaist done that thair, if ye wur a bad boy (laughter).

[00:03:08.02] Elizabeth: Were you a bad boy?

[00:03:09.12] Alex Workman: No, A don't think so, no, no, A don't think A wus, no.

[00:03:14.06] Elizabeth: You have a son in Canada and you've been out thair and visited him?

[00:03:18.05] Alex Workman: A have, A've been thair seven times.

[00:03:20.18] Elizabeth: Seven times? Lovely.

[00:03:22.13] Alex Workman: Seven times. The last time I went (Jeannie, she wus dead at this time) an I went meself

[00:03:30.09] an whun I got aff the plane in Toronto, I wus makin fur the, A wus lookin fur London...

[00:03:36.25] fur the plane fur London, ye see, an A wus walkin away up...

[00:03:39.16] A walked, it wus a guid bit, it's a big place the Airport - an A seen this girl at a desk an she wus a white girl, like mesel...

[00:03:49.02] An A went up tae her (an as I thought, A wus speakin guid Ing'lish)

[00:03:54.00] an A asked her whar A wud get the plane fur London an some other questions, an she says, "Dae ye speak Ing'lish?"

[00:04:02.18] (Laughter) an A wus speakin, A thought, very good Ing'lish!

[00:04:08.10] Elizabeth: It wus your Cullybackey accent.

[00:04:12.16] Alex Workman: Ay, Cullybackey, ay.

[00:04:18.13] Elizabeth: Ah dear! Well, when you were young, did you go to dances or kaileys or anything like that?

[00:04:22.24] Alex Workman: No, we went tae... They'd a dancin class in The Craigs every yeir an I always went tae that

[00:04:29.00] but I never harly went tae dances or anythin like that. I never liked dancin very well.

[00:04:32.25] An oul boy, Jim McAteer, wi a fiddle, he sut up on the platform an he played the fiddle fur the dancers.

[00:04:40.07] Then the' all joined in tae the Lancers an the Sets an things like this. It wus great.

[00:04:45.13] Elizabeth: Oh, they don't know the Lancers now...

[00:04:48.06] Alex Workman: Naw, naw, naw.

[00:04:49.23] Elizabeth: Thair's a lot of learning in those. You weren't married at that time?

[00:04:52.29] Alex Workman: Oh no, A wusnae married tae A wus twenty-three.

[00:04:56.28] We went tae Galgorm Parks - ma father got hurt in the Maine, ye see an he got... The' give him five hundert poun fur lossin all them things on his han at that time...

[00:05:08.06] an thair wus a wee farm o lan down in Galgorm Parks an he haed bought it fur four hundert poun A think it wus.

[00:05:15.07] Five acres o lan in it, an a wee house wi a slatit roof - an we wur terble happy thair. It wus a lovely home, a lovely wee home - an plenty o hard work.

[00:05:25.17] A set rigs in the fiels. A set all the fiels wi rigs yeir about, ye know, an put potatoes in them.

[00:05:32.28] The' wur harly worth pittin them in fur all the potatoes grew on it.

[00:05:35.20] Elizabeth: I know, but still, it broke it up.... Then you were married from thair?

[00:05:41.11] Alex Workman: I wus married fae the Galgorm Park.

[00:05:43.14] Elizabeth: And where did you go to live once you were married?

[00:05:45.28] Alex Workman: We went tae a wee house at The Cross, the Far Cross.

[00:05:50.14] Thair wus two houses, one against th' other, ye know - one o them wus thatched.

[00:05:56.04] The big one wus thatched but ours wus slatit an thair wus jaist the wee bottom place - thair wus a bit boardit-aff fur a bedroom.

[00:06:04.22] An the livin-room an the wee bedroom wus all one, but it wus closed-off, ye know

[00:06:10.11] an thair wus a wee loft in it: it wus only a... Like steps up tae it, up tae this wee loft - an we used tae hae tae pit...

[00:06:20.21] Whaniver we püt the wean tae bed (that wus Andy), we had tae pit a tay-chist at the beck

[00:06:26.08] at the tap o the stairs tae keep him fae fallin doon these things, these steps

[00:06:32.26] Because he'd get out o bed an ye'd hae lukked up, he wus stannin lukkin over the...

[00:06:37.10] Elizabeth: Wus that what they called nearly a 'tripper'?

[00:06:39.18] Alex Workman: Ay, a tripper, that's what it wus, that's what it wus. An ye seen the wee curly head, lukkin over the tay chist...

[00:06:47.01] An then Jeannie wud hae shouted, "Get intae bed". (Laughter) Och dear oh.

[00:06:54.18] Elizabeth: Then you would go up to your Uncle Wullie-John's quite a lot - and you would have fun with the other cousins?

[00:07:01.00] Alex Workman: Oh very much. Andy an me wus great friends an we used tae thresh at night thair, up in the laft above the stables, wi a han-thresher.

[00:07:12.19] An thair wus two or three o us ye know, it wus guid fun. Threshin the corn fur the...

[00:07:18.07] Elizabeth: Ay, you never used the flail then, no?

[00:07:20.13] Alex Workman: Not much. Ma father flailed. A niver liked the oul flail - A niver cud do it very well.

[00:07:25.27] Elizabeth: No, thair's a knack in it.

[00:07:28.00] Alex Workman: Ay but when we wur down on the wee farm, ma father had a flail

[00:07:30.15] an we sowed corn an all, an he flailed it. He wus right an guid at it.

[00:07:38.08] Elizabeth: Your father wus a very hard worker.

[00:07:39.19] Alex Workman: He wus a hard workin wee man, he wus indeed, ay.

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