

THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

Willie Cromie and Will McAvoy interview DOROTHY DUNBAR on 5th March 2002. Born Dorothy Taggart in Greyabbey in 1914, Dorothy moved to Ballywalter after her marriage. Note that there is a hissing noise throughout this interview. Dorothy recalls dancing on the road in her youth, and the gypsies coming round to sell clothes pegs and tins. She and Will remember the Boy Scouts camping on an island in Strangford Lough, and Dorothy remembers a 'character' from Greba. They talk about how times have changed – in terms of neighbours, food, bathing etc.

[00:00:00.00] Dorothy: And then we went tae wee dances up in McGarry's Hall away up at the heid o the raa.

[00:00:06.04] McGarry had a pub up thonner, we used tae go up thair.

[00:00:10.00] Willie Cromie: Wus the blacksmith's shap up thair then?

[00:00:12.05] Dorothy: Ay, Wullie Edgar.

[00:00:13.20] Willie Cromie: Right, A suppose ye'd 'a' had a luk in thair tae.

[00:00:15.16] Dorothy: Och, monie a time we wur in. An then thair wur fellas had hooses up thonner fae Bilfawst

[00:00:19.27] an we aye went up tae them whan we wur cummin hame fae Cairdy Hall, och ay, it wus great.

[00:00:25.27] Willie Cromie: Ye wur tellin us yin nicht before, but, about the boys cummin on the bikes frae Newtown - the Spring Loanen.

[00:00:30.26] Dorothy: Och ay, Jim McKeown an Harry Gregory – an he brought the mouth organ an we danced thonner at Spring Loanen.

[00:00:37.17] Willie Cromie: At the mooth o the loanen?

[00:00:38.18] Will McAvoy: On the road?

[00:00:39.19] Dorothy: On the road, ay.

[00:00:40.29] Will McAvoy: Ye wudnae dance much noo on the road.

[00:00:42.15] Dorothy: Na A think ye cudnae fur motors. Sure thair wurnae a motor passed then, na.

[00:00:49.17] Ye uist tae waatch fur them cummin roon the Temple Corner at nicht, see the lichts cummin roon the corner.

[00:00:56.02] An then we uist tae get wur hans read at the Slae Büshes wi the gypsies.

[00:01:01.02] We wud hae went aboot ten o'clock, like in the simmer nichts, an got wur hans read.

[00:01:05.17] Willie Cromie: Wur they a reglar thing doon thair then?

[00:01:07.03] Dorothy: Oh ay, they cum thair, an then ma Aunt Lizzie wud hae sayed she mebbe wus finishin her sewin, an she wud hae sayed,

[00:01:14.16] 'Cum on oot tae the door tae ye see the big fire the gypsies haes on, away about, och away after twelve o'clock, burnin bright.

[00:01:22.09] An the sings o them, ye wud hae heerd the sings o them.

[00:01:26.28] An then the horses cum up tae whaur, ye know thon gress, Will, at the front, the' cum up thonner at nicht tae graze, ay.

[00:01:35.10] Willie Cromie: Well then wud they hae went roon, the gypsies at that time, wi the claes-pegs an things like that, like white heather? The' uist tae cum wi a bit o white heather.

[00:01:44.20] Dorothy and Will McAvoy (talking over each other): Oh ay, A know. A mine them sellin claes-pegs an tins, tin cans.

An thair wur tinkers - tins!

[00:01:51.03] Dorothy: Old Joe McKay used tae cum roon wi it, wi the basket an tins an aa in it. He wud hae cum tae ma Granny Taggart.

[00:01:57.29] He wud hae sayed, "Jane, A want you tae buy somethin first frae me, fur ye'r aye brave an lucky". (Laughter) Ay indeed, och ay.

[00:02:08.23] An we used tae go away oot, the' cal it 'The Commons' roon thonner, Will, by ma Aunt Lizzie's, ye know yon bit. Thon wus The Commons.

[00:02:16.08] An we went away roon bi thon an through Skillin's plantin, an through by your hoose an on tae the Big Islan.

[00:02:23.24] Will McAvoy: That's right.

[00:02:24.04] Dorothy: Ay. Hae you mine o the Boy Scouts on it?

[00:02:27.12] Will McAvoy: Yes.

[00:02:28.16] Dorothy: Ay, I can mine o them tae. We used tae gae ivver tae see the Boy Scouts. Ah tents, oh füll o tents.

[00:02:36.00] Willie Cromie: Wus that on an islan in the Lough?

[00:02:37.11] Dorothy: Ay.

[00:02:38.08] Will McAvoy: Ay, oot thair on the Mid-Isle, Sooth Isle. The' wud always cum thair, Holywood Scouts - the' cum frae Holywood some o them.

[00:02:45.27] Dorothy: Och ay, I think sae.

[00:02:47.04] Will McAvoy: An the Borstal Boys wur thair too.

[00:02:48.20] Dorothy: Wur they?

[00:02:50.04] Willie Cromie: Ye hae seen a wheen o changes aboot here tae, ivver the yeirs?

[00:02:53.19] Dorothy: Och, Willie, ye wudnae hae a nibor. Na, ye wudnae hae a nibor. Micht speak but that's aa.

[00:03:01.04] Ither times, folks' doors wus apen, ye cud hae went intae onieboadie.

[00:03:04.23] Aye willin tae help ye. But noo ye wudnae, nae time fur ye - it's aa loast.

[00:03:10.19] Willie Cromie: Thair wud hae been an odd character aboot Greba then tae, like aa the rest o them. Hae ye mine o onie o them at all?

[00:03:17.20] Dorothy: I mine oul Johnny Kelly on the Eleventh Nicht. He bate the drums up an doon the street the whole nicht, the Eleventh Nicht, oul Johnny.

[00:03:27.11] Willie Cromie: You didnae dae the shewin then did ye, laik the rest o them?

[00:03:31.00] Dorothy: A wee bit but no much, no much na.

[00:03:34.07] Will McAvoy: The' caa'ed it floerin, did the' caa it floerin?

[00:03:36.01] Dorothy: Ay, floerin, ay. A had an Aunt, she got somethin fae the Queen fur shewin, Aunt Egres, ay, from Greyabbey.

[00:03:45.10] Willie Cromie: An A suppose that's loast noo, the wee Award. It wud hae been nice tae hae that thair.

[00:03:50.03] Dorothy: Ay, oul folk cud hae telt ye laik - fur A hae mine, whan A wus at hame,

[00:03:57.03] A wus workin in the Mill an ma Aunt Lizzie jaist haed the big clock on the fireplace.

[00:04:02.11] An here this moarnin didn't the clock stap an she says, 'Dorothy, ye may get up fur the clock's stapped at three o'clock'.

[00:04:10.03] An she says, 'A mebbe can tell the time bi the licht o the sky'.

[00:04:15.18] Willie Cromie: Boys-a-dear. (Laughter)

[00:04:17.09] Dorothy: Ay. Well we got up at three o'clock. She made a big fry an she sayes, 'We'll hae tae waatch tae see if we see a licht cummin roon King's Coarner'.

[00:04:29.11] So here, a guid while efter that, A lukked oot an A seen it. Says I, 'Thonner's somebody cummin on a bicycle'. Ye seen the bicycle lamp.

[00:04:36.22] A says, 'A'll go down tae the en o the road an ast them the time'.

[00:04:40.22] So the moon wus shinin, A was stannin in agin the fectory gate, an A yells at this man, 'Whut time is it please?' Half past six!

[00:04:49.06] Willie Cromie: She jaist wusnae sae guid at tellin the time.

[00:04:52.15] Dorothy: No, she says, 'A can tell ye the time by the licht o the sky'. But we'd wur breakfast about three o'clock or shoartly efter 'it!

[00:05:01.25] Will McAvoy: Well, hae you mine o the pub at the tap o the raa, Hard Breid Raa?

[00:05:05.17] Dorothy: Ay, Bairds, Bairds had it.

[00:05:08.11] Will McAvoy: Hae you mine o it goin? Yes, open as a pub?

[00:05:11.04] Dorothy: Ay, A kine o mine bein in it, yince, jaist like lukkin in it.

[00:05:12.13] Will McAvoy: Dae ye? That wee Hall ye wur taakin aboot wus at the side o it?

[00:05:16.03] Dorothy: Ay, that's right.

[00:05:17.21] Will McAvoy: We used tae caa it... Andy Carson's. We caaed it Andy Carson's Hall. Ay, the wee hall. I mine the dances bein in it.

[00:05:25.27] I think Oul Wullie Acheson played the melodion at it.

[00:05:28.17] Dorothy: Ay, he did. Well then thair wus trips cum into Greba, away aboot, A suppose aboot saiven o'clock on the simmer nichts

[00:05:35.01] an bands wi them, an played up an doon the street.

[00:05:38.00] An got thair tay up on the Cottage Hill. Mrs Wright run it then.

[00:05:43.04] Will McAvoy: Ay, the' used tae hae a wee Tea Room up thair.

[00:05:45.18] Dorothy: The' haed. Big, big gless front. A dunno if it's still thair ir no.

[00:05:49.26] Will McAvoy: An did you niver eat the cockles whan ye wur in Greba?

[00:05:51.26] Dorothy: No A didnae like the cockles ether. A wusnae keen on ocht oot o the shore. No A wusnae.

[00:05:58.24] Will McAvoy: Och away - cos the folk frae Greba leaved on cockles. Iverie Sunday efternoon, the' went fur cockles.

[00:06:03.01] Dorothy: No, A cudnae hae et them.

[00:06:04.07] Will McAvoy: Away! An then the herrin men used tae cum roon the toon wi the herrin, dae ye mine? The hooses wus stinkin wi fryin herrin like.

[00:06:15.28] Dorothy: Guid times.

[00:06:17.08] Willie Cromie: One thing, thair wasnae much fancy stuff on the breid cairt.

[00:06:19.15] Dorothy: Och na. Ye got mebbe a loaf an mebbe a couple o sodas or somethin.

[00:06:24.18] Willie Cromie: An the loaf wusnae sliced even - an it wus the oul roon.....

[00:06:27.04] Dorothy: No it wusnae, ye haed tae cut it.

[00:06:29.00] Willie Cromie: The 'plain loaf' as the' caa it. Mebbe a Paris bun on a guid day.

[00:06:35.13] Dorothy: Ay indeed. Nae Paris buns noo 'at A iver see.

[00:06:38.02] Will McAvoy: Na, it's aa rowled in paper, it's aa rowled in paper tae. Iveriethin ye get, iveriethin's rowled in paper.

[00:06:44.29] Willie Cromie: It wus a hard way tae make a shillin, them coal boats tae.

[00:06:47.16] Dorothy: Och ay, it was hard aa day.

[00:06:50.02] Willie Cromie: An like thair wus nae bath fur them tae get intae whan the' cum hame, ye know. Ye haed nae rinnin wattèr in the hoose.

[00:06:55.27] Dorothy: Och ay, ye jaist haed tae hae a big thing o wattèr ready for them.

[00:06:58.24] Willie Cromie: Ma Da jaist waashed in front o the fire wi a big yin o them oul... It wus the tin bath ye daen the waashin in, that wus him....

[00:07:03.08] Dorothy: Och I know that. Whaniver ma Aunt Lizzie went away tae King's Corner,

[00:07:11.13] ma Uncle Johnnie had a sister leaved roon thonner in thon hooses beside Mrs M'gommerie's.

[00:07:16.10] An thair wur nae hooses near whar we leaved, aroon The Pun thonner. An she...

[00:07:21.01] D'ye know the big baths the' used tae hae, wi the big lang backs oan them?

[00:07:24.10] Willie Cromie and Will McAvoy (together): Aye big lang backs, galvanised, yes.

[00:07:26.28] She wud hae brought, or ma Uncle Johnny wud hae brought thon in an set it at the fire an A haed a bath in it.

[00:07:32.21] An A wusnae a bit feart roon thonner. I wusnae a bit feart, A cud hae steyed mesel, A wusnae feart.

[00:07:39.00] Noo A need tae tak the key oot o the door if A'm in here masel at nicht, the folk's that bad noo.

[00:07:45.03] An A niver wus feart, an A haed a bath an daen ma teeth an daen iveriethin. Ay.

[00:07:53.00] I mean the' wur away at the Mill an A used tae gaun oot at nicht tae hear if A cud hear thair feet cummin, ay, A wusnae a bit feart.

[00:08:02.25] Then we uist tae go doon tae Susanna Hagan's.

[00:08:06.00] Will McAvoy: Susanna along the shore, along the brae at Bairns's?

[00:08:08.18] Dorothy: Molly Carr an me. An it wus a great big, big kitchen - an oul Frenk jaist slep at nicht - we wur feart o Frenk.

[00:08:17.01] Will McAvoy: 'Tote' the' caaed him.

[00:08:18.02] Dorothy: Tote Hagan's. An he slep in the bed an he wus aye gettin up an lookin at us an we wur feart, ye know.

[00:08:26.14] An Susanna, she wud hae sung tae us.

[00:08:29.06] An cummin oot, we wur clabbert wi flays. Oor legs wus clabbert wi flays, ye know wee black flays, ye know, ay.

[00:08:40.00] Willie Cromie: Wus thair hoose jaist hoachin wi them?

[00:08:42.02] Dorothy: We niver went back.

[00:08:44.15] Willie Cromie: I'm sure your folk raged a bit whan ye went hame?

[00:08:46.27] Dorothy: We got them aff before we went hame. It wus mair like on the back o oor legs.

[00:08:52.12] Willie Cromie: Ay, gettin at the skin fur ye wudnae hae had nae nylons or naethin on.

[00:08:56.10] Dorothy: Oh na, we wur in our bare legs in the simmer time, ay.

[00:09:04.28] Willie Cromie: But then folk cud hae grew a brave lot in the wee gairdens the' had then.

[00:09:07.15] Dorothy: Oh ay, roon The Pun thonner, Uncle Johnnie haed thon big square. He haed iveriethin in it, an then he haed a great big bit at the side.

[00:09:16.02] Will McAvoy: That's right, he had indeed, ay. An he worked aa that efter cummin hame fae daein a day's work.

[00:09:22.06] Dorothy: Ay up in Mount, Rosemount, ay. An he uised tae sell cabbage an things like that. I mean he haed that big a place.

[00:09:32.15] Will McAvoy: It wus a big, big garden.

[00:09:33.20] Dorothy: Ma Aunt Lizzie cud hae daen it better than him. She cud hae daen it, nae doot aboot it, beetroot an oniethin.

[00:09:41.19] Willie Cromie: An then it fed youse and ye got a couple o shillin sellin tae folk, it wus worth it.

[00:09:47.00] Dorothy: I know that, ay. Folk came roon for it. Ay.

[00:09:51.21] Big, big gairden, terble big it wus, an a big bit at the side. I think she daen the maist o it.

[00:09:57.16] Willie Cromie: Aa daen in vegetables? She pit a drill o prootas in tae?

[00:10:01.09] Dorothy: Och ay, prootas anaa. Strawberries and raspberries, an gooseberries an iveriethin in it, ay.

[00:10:10.05] Willie Cromie: Thair's no monie folk daes that noo.

[00:10:11.23] Dorothy and Will McAvoy (together): Ach nane, not at all, na, na. Nane.

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