

THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

On St Patrick's Day, 17th March 2003, Elizabeth McLeister and her husband interview Margaret McCurdy at her home in Broughshane. A retired schoolteacher, Margaret recalls the escape of a raging bull when she was a wee girl. She talks about her career and the difficulty of driving to Larne in bad snowy conditions. Margaret also remembers having her sprained leg 'charmed' by a local healer.

[00:00:00.00] Elizabeth: Well this is a nice part of the world and it's nice today because we're....

[00:00:04.12] Margaret: Lovely. This is St Patrick's Day. A wile when o folk up on Slaimish, thair wur a wile when yesterday an the road wus... och, ye couldnae hae waaked on it, that monie cars.

[00:00:18.01] John telt me no tae be goin ontae the road wi the dug, jaist tae waak up an doon the loanen, it wus that bad.

[00:00:26.08] Elizabeth: Quite a lot of traffic theday too.

[00:00:28.18] Margaret: I would think that but it's quater than it used to be on a St Patrick's Day fur the' knocked doon al the dykes, and they left gates open, an the' lut cattle oot, an gien a lot o cheek.

[00:00:43.27] An one o them, he telt... Thair's a man up the road (the'd knocked doon a dyke) an he gien them a when o clouts. That's about two yeirs ago.

[00:00:54.01] 'My Da'll be comin tae you'. He says, 'You jaist bring your Da noo and A'll gie yer Da a clout,' - but thair nae Da iver cum, naw.

[00:01:04.01] Elizabeth: Do you mine gettin your first bicycle?

[00:01:06.17] Margaret: A hae mine o gettin my first bicycle. A learnt tae ride on a bicycle... Thair wus a girl went fur music up the road tae a cousin o oors, an her wee sister, she cal'd here.

[00:01:23.01] And she haed a wee bicycle an her an me tried to ride roon that fiel; an ma Mother an anither wumman houlin the bicycle roun a fiel there.

[00:01:34.04] Well then A think I got a wee bicycle efter that an uist tae keep it in the hoose - no, in a wee hall there, A kep it in a wee hall.

[00:01:46.23] An thair wus yin time, it wus efter ma faither died, an we wurnae very oul and thair wus naebodie here but ma mother an me.

[00:01:57.01] An this wild animal o a bull, oh clean mad, an Ayrshire... I heerd the commotion and it got, it ripped the door, got oot an intae the yard, an the creamery cans wur sittin an it tumbled them.

[00:02:13.04] And I wus up the stairs an I watched oot the bathroom wunda and we didnae know whut on earth tae dae. It wus headin fur the door, I wus sure it wus fur cummin tae the back door an rippin it up.

[00:02:26.12] So I went up an got the bicycle oot o the wee hall, an got away on the bicycle - it wus beginnin tae get dark - an away doon the road, an thair seemed tae be naebodie about.

[00:02:39.20] Them hooses wurnae there at the time, but there wus yin o the hooses there but thair wur naebodie in it. An away along the Kirkhill Road an A went up intae a place, Robysins.

[00:02:51.24] An eventually thair wur a lot of folk gaithered up an A don't know hoo the' managed it, ye know. The'd dug an forks an things - an whan John cum hame, he wus housed.

[00:03:05.02] So he had tae go tae the market the followin Setterday - an that wus a commotion. He wus, A think, let intae a field and the couldnae get near him - and he wus doon, ye know, an scraas flyin in al directions.

[00:03:24.26] And I think a cousin, Willie Esler (A dunno whether ye know him or no) he wus there on a horse - and it hit the horse, dinged, damaged the horse.

[00:03:40.21] So it wus away in the days whan the Kearneys were greatly tae the fore; and yin o their lorries cum oot an an owl boadie in it who wus drunk.

[00:03:54.23] An he run at the büll wi a pitchfork an jabbed it in the ee-, eyes. An the' got it oot o the fiel that way an ramstammed it intae the lorry.

[00:04:07.02] It didnae mean tae go intae the lorry; it kine o went intae the lorry an they got it, so A think we wur thankful tae say guidbye to that boy.

[00:04:16.23] Elizabeth: And it jaist went mad?

[00:04:17.23] Margaret: It went mad. Whan I wus comin hame from schuil whiles, it wus in a field away back up there, and it must have smelt me, but it got doon on its knees an scraas flyin in al directions.

[00:04:33.26] So then eventually A went tae a college in London, A wantit tae go tae London; and A taught in 'Cambridge College of Arts and Technology' it wus cal'd, an A taught there.

[00:04:49.28] An then A cum hame fur ma Mother wusnae a bit weel an she wus... She haed fell an broken her leg an A cudnae jaist take her up at hospitals an hames, so A cum hame.

[00:05:05.02] An then A went back tae university an took a degree in English an then I niver haed a very permanent job tae A got the job in Lerne.

[00:05:22.12] Elizabeth: And that was a bit of a burden too?

[00:05:24.14] Margaret: Oh, it wusnae easy an then thair wur far mair snaa then, an frost, an a wile bad road.

[00:05:31.18] Elizabeth: How did you get tae Larne?

[00:05:33.14] Margaret: Well, A went up the Racavan Road whan A could an cum out at 'The Battery' if ye know whaur The Battery is.

[00:05:40.06] Elizabeth: Did ye drive a wee car?

[00:05:41.09] Margaret: Uh-huh. And some folk whiles wunnered hoo A got up the road, an thinkin on it, A wunner mysel hoo A got up it, fur it wus a very steep road.

[00:05:52.20] An thair wus yin day A wus gaun up, an thair I seen in the mirror, the bus comin - that wus the school bus, an I thought, 'Oh dear oh,' an the road, ye know an the buses had a wider...

[00:06:08.01] and mine was in, it wus like a ploughed snow field. "Oh," I thought, "Whut am I fur daein, A hope I get up ower this brae" - thair wur a bad bend on it, Bellygelly Orange Haa.

[00:06:20.11] Well, this bad bend... And I thought if I could get roon this corner an up ower the tap before the bus cums...

[00:06:28.03] But there, whut did the car dae? It took a slide, a skid - it wus jaist like you nicht as weel 'a' been in a ploughed snow field.

[00:06:36.29] It jaist took a skid richt across the wrong side o the road an thair it sut an spun and a bodie passed me on the wrang side, but I jaist had tae sit there.

[00:06:48.17] A'm sittin an I cud see the bus gettin nearer an suddenly it took a dive right across tae whaur it shud hae been an I got ower the tap. I niver forgot that - it wus serious.

[00:07:01.05] Dae ye know May Clements?

[00:07:03.06] Elizabeth (and her husband talking over each other): Oh yes, yes, I know May. They live on that road. May lives on that same road.

[00:07:07.14] Margaret: Ay, I remember she ... One time she saw me in the town, I had fallen a thump and had the leg all bandaged up, and she said, "You're no gaunnae get about like that, Margaret, for a while".

[00:07:22.05] And she says, "If you cum ower, A'll tak ye tae this wumman'll charm it". Dae ye know about her?

[00:07:27.20] Elizabeth: No.

[00:07:29.13] Margaret: She lived up a lane - Armour Kennedy's wife, is there an Armour Kennedy?

[00:07:36.03] Elizabeth (and her husband talking over each other): There is. I remember Armour, he had the Clydesdale horses...

[00:07:39.00] Margaret: Ay, horses.

[00:07:40.10] Elizabeth: That's jaist about a when o' field lengths from me.

[00:07:43.25] Margaret: Ay, well May took me there and so A had tae go three times.

[00:07:50.16] Elizabeth's Husband: Wus it Armour's wife was the charmer?

[00:07:52.01] Margaret: Uh-huh. An' the first time I wus there she said, 'It'll feel a bit better today at five o'clock'. Well A know it wus wile sore oniewye - it wus terrible.

[00:08:04.27] A went over on it or something is what did it in the first place.

[00:08:08.13] So, at five o'clock dae ye know it was a bit better. Well, I had tae go back the next day and she said, 'It'll be a lot better at five o'clock,' an it was.

[00:08:21.24] And the next day she says, 'It'll be completely better,' an so it was.

[00:08:27.03] Elizabeth (and her husband talking over each other): Oh ay. Was that a sprain you had got? I didn't know, Margaret, had they a charm for a sprain?

[00:08:32.22] Margaret: She said it was the only yin she had, she hadnae a charm for oniethin else she telt me.

[00:08:37.14] Elizabeth's Husband: I was offered that charm one time and didn't take it.

[00:08:40.03] Margaret: You were offered tae be able to do it?

[00:08:41.25] Elizabeth's Husband: Ay, not from her now, but from another old lady. I stepped on a....

[00:08:45.14] I had ringworm one time too on the side of the neck and went to a Catholic man and he charmed it and it healed up in no time.

[00:08:51.15] Margaret: Uh-huh. Oh ay, A've heard o ringworm too. I think I haed a cousin had awful ringworm and his father took him tae this man, one of the Kearneys about Portglenone...

[00:09:02.25] Elizabeth's Husband: Ay, that's who I went to, a guy in Portglenone. Same man, Paddy Kearney, Pat Kearney.

[00:09:10.14] Margaret: Uh-huh, likely the same one.