

THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

William Carson (born Greyabbey, County Down in 1930) talks to Willie Cromie and Will McAvoy in February 2003. He recalls his days working at Black's Egg Packing Factory in Newtownards and talks about an unusual old character from Greyabbey.

[00:00:00.13] William Carson: Ye know, whan A wud 'a' left the schuil, A staired tae wark - A warked in Blecks.

[00:00:06.21] An then ma feet tuk bad wi weerin the oul wattèr boots al day an it jaist wusnae the place fur me so...

[00:00:15.18] The time the sojers wus gettin demobbed, or the Home Gaird, ye'r taakin about ma young days. The' haed the Home Gaird an the' haed the A.R.P.

[00:00:26.15] Oh, ma Da daen his time durin the War an then he, A suppose he'd served his purpose. But A hae mine o the air raids in Bilfawst an the' wur alwus caa'ed oot.

[00:00:37.26] Willie Cromie: Well then ye left the factory?

[00:00:39.24] William Carson: Oh, A went an worked at Robert Muckleboy's.

[00:00:43.23] Willie Cromie: Whut wus that at then?

[00:00:45.11] William Carson: Oh, that wus in tha egg business in Bellyheft.

[00:00:50.11] Willie Cromie: Noo, jaist whauraboos is Bellyheft fur a man disnae know aa the toonlans?

[00:00:53.28] William Carson: Noo, Bellyheft wud be half-wye between Greba an Newtown. Och, a fair bit o the oul buildin's still thair yit.

[00:01:03.11] Willie Cromie: Is that it oan the richt-han, oan the shore-side?

[00:01:06.06] William Carson: Oh it's oan the shore-side, oh ay, ay.

[00:01:08.01] Willie Cromie: Jaist as ye go up near the Ballyblack Road?

[00:01:09.12] William Carson: Ay. Hugh Barr an Robert McAvoy, they run it - an mine ye, it wus a hive o ectivity.

[00:01:19.00] Willie Cromie: Ye see, whan A cum up tae wark here at first, we uist tae caa that.... Whan the boy oan tha bus spoke tae us, he'd say that wus tha Egg Factory.

[00:01:25.09] William Carson: Oh ay, ay. No, the ectual name wus the Egg Peckin Station.

[00:01:30.01] Willie Cromie: Ay, well the' caa'ed it the Egg Factory.

[00:01:31.21] William Carson: Oh no, no. But it wus a hive o ectivity. Ma twun sister an masel, we packed the eggs, we tested the eggs an...

[00:01:42.04] Willie Cromie: An somebodie went roon the countryside an collectit thaim like?

[00:01:46.15] William Carson: Oh aye. Rabert Muckleboy an Frank Agar wud hae bin the twa lorry drivers, but...

[00:01:59.02] The' went roon the country collectin eggs an the'd hae supplied the shaps an shipped eggs tae Glesga an London.

[00:02:08.03] Willie Cromie: They did not!

[00:02:10.15] William Carson: No, whan A think back tae nineteen foartie-echt, the through-put in that wee egg peckin station wus ivver between six an seiven hunner cases o eggs a week, an ye know...

[00:02:26.09] Willie Cromie: Wur the' in a wee wudden case, laik a wee licht yin an the' wur packed inside that then?

[00:02:33.21] William Carson: Oh, thair wus thirty dizzen eggs in a box, in a case. Oh ay. An it wus whut ye called 'cannlin' the eggs.

[00:02:45.20] Ye held... Ye haed twa eggs in each han, an ye pit yin up, lukked at it an saw the air cell wus right, an the shellazie an the yolk, an iveriethin wus in the richt place.

[00:03:00.22] Willie Cromie: The shellazie?

William Carson: The shellazie.

[00:03:02.22] Willie Cromie: Whut's that? Is that the white o it?

[00:03:04.21] William Carson: No, no, no - the white wus caa'ed the albumen.

Willie Cromie: Right.

[00:03:08.26] William Carson: It wus the white bit between the egg an the egg shell, that really kep the egg...

[00:03:17.21] Willie Cromie: Well, whut about the shellazie, wus that...?

[00:03:20.06] William Carson: The shellazie wus a bit o a thing, it wus laik a worm doon at the bottom but it kep the egg in place - or the yolk, the yolk in place.

[00:03:31.01] Willie Cromie: A niver heerd that in ma life.

[00:03:32.27] William Carson: Oh boy, ye'r learnin somethin theday; ye'r learnin somethin about the egg business.

[00:03:39.15] Ye know, whan an egg wus laid, thair's whut ye called the air cell - but whan the egg was laid, thair was nae air cell.

[00:03:53.07] An then, as the oors went on, the air cell wud appear tae it wus about the size o a thruppenny bit - an it wus a guid fresh egg.

[00:04:06.07] An ye know, lukkin back at nineteen forty-eicht, Bellyheft, as A say, wus a hive o ectivity.

[00:04:18.25] We shipped eggs tae Glesga an tae London, an then we daen al the shaps in Newton an Bengor, oh ay.

[00:04:30.17] Oh ay, thair wus big times aboot Ballyheft. A mine them haein an egg cleanin demonstration, they brought a...

[00:04:39.29] Willie Cromie: Egg cleanin?

[00:04:41.13] William Carson: Ay, the eggs was goin tae hae tae be dry-cleaned, an the farmer haed tae write a certificate that the' wur dry-cleaned - fur monie a time A wud hae wrote a certificate an the' haed tae sign it.

[00:04:57.25] But the' haed a cleanin demonstration: it was lek a buff - an the' held the egg up tae this buff an it wud 'a' tuk the hen's droppins aff...

[00:05:11.00] Willie Cromie: Tuk tha dirt aff it.

[00:05:12.14] William Carson: Ay, the' said that if ye washed the eggs in a tap, it's poor and lut the air into the egg an...

[00:05:23.15] A cud niver understan tae this day why thair's places in fridges fur eggs, fur an egg should niver be kep in a fridge.

[00:05:36.08] An egg shud be kep in the temperature o the average room - fifty-three tae fifty-five degrees, an it shud keep fur six weeks.

[00:05:47.16] Willie Cromie: Is that hoo lang a fresh egg wull keep fur?

[00:05:48.14] William Carson: It should dae, fur A wus sent tae coorses at Loughrie College an that's hoo A got tae know....

[00:05:58.26] Willie Cromie: An then did ye jaist stay indoors?

[00:06:00.29] William Carson: Oh A wus indoors an then thair wus a boadie, Wullie Byukennin, he worked in it.

[00:06:07.27] Then A wus pit on the lorry, alang wi Rabert, goin roon the fairms an buyin püllets an lookin at coarn.

[00:06:20.03] Willie Cromie: A suppose ye wur laik a soart o a newspaper whan ye arrived at the fairm yaird?... Ye carried the information frae yin tae the ither.

[00:06:26.21] William Carson: Oh aye, ye cud put it that way. Ay certainly whan ye wur at the oul lorry, ye met the folk an A tuk an interest in the folk...

[00:06:36.12] An the folk wud hae tuk an interest in me really fur A suppose A wus an obligin soart o a craytèr an wud hae daen things fur them, ye know, an that soart o thing.

[00:06:47.21] An A did enjoy ma time gang through the country on that oul lorry. Mine ye, as A say, ye did really see the four seasons at thair best.

[00:06:58.08] Willie Cromie: An at thair worst, half-time.

[00:07:01.01] William Carson: An at thair worst, half-time. Mebbe mair worst than best.

[00:07:05.20] Willie Cromie: Well ye must hae run across the odd character amang aa thaim yins.

[00:07:09.01] William Carson: Oh A did rin amang different kerectèrs an, in fect, kerectèrs aboot Greba, ye know. Thair wus Lennie McKee.

[00:07:25.19] Lennie McKee wus a soart o an invaleed or cripple.

[00:07:30.23] He haed very shoart legs - an boys cummin up oot o the schuil wud a went in an (he jaist leaved hissel) an the' wud hae pit him ontæ his back - it wus cruel ye know.

[00:07:44.09] But he wus jaist laik an oul sheep on his back fur he jaist cudnae get back up til someboadie...

[00:07:50.13] He yelled an scraiched til someboadie wud hae heard him an got him righted somehow.

Willie Cromie: An birlled him ivver again.

[00:07:57.13] William Carson: But ye know, the' used tae tak him tae Bellywalter or Kirkcubbin or whauriver thair wus a circus an that on.

[00:08:06.24] In fect, thair wus yin time the boys o Greba tuk him doon tae Kirkcubbin tae the circus

[00:08:13.23] an the' haed tae püsh him in this contraption o a cairt that A think the Montgomeries had got it made fur him.

[00:08:21.22] An he haed a big, he haed a big dernin needle wi him an he wus goin tae gie the elephant a bit o a jag.

Willie Cromie: He was not!

[00:08:32.04] William Carson: Ay, he said that the elephants didnae forget, an he said that the elephant wudnae forget him ether, fur he wus gaun tae get him this jag.

[00:08:47.15] An then Jock McKay he wus stannin alang the shore yin day an they fell oot.

[00:08:53.14] A daen't know whut tha row was aboot, but McKee says tae McKay, he says, 'Ye'r jaist a big lang-leggit loobin'.

[00:09:07.29] Ay, Jock says, 'Lenny, ye know whut you ir? Ye'r jaist laik a Jack-in-the-box - if ye haed a spring at yer backside', an he says, 'A'm gaun tae punish ye'...

[00:09:18.16] Jock jaist tuk him intae the slae büshes an tuk him as far oot in the tide as ye cud get an cum back oot

[00:09:26.22] an Jock's up on the, on the shore waa, whustlin away, an thair the tide's stairtin tae cum in, an tha yells o Lenny wus somethin shockin.

[00:09:40.00] But A think he got, mebbe got it up his legs a bit, A din't know whether he'd feet or no, but he got a taste o wattèr aboot him oniewye.

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