

Brough Transcription Template

Accession Number:	
Batch Number:	
Date of Interview:	20/02/2011
Interviewee Name:	Angela Lewis
Fieldworker Name:	Sharon G. Pottinger
Keywords:	Holidays, Brough, Murkle, beach, sea, hill.
Interview Summary:	Recollections of childhood holidays in Brough and Murkle, living conditions, friendships, freedom. Timings in red. Unclear speech shown as (???)

Transcription

(remember to note time code from recording regularly to make it easy to find key quotes quickly later)

SP: There we go. OK, today is February 20th, Sunday, this is Sharon Gunnerson Pottinger interviewing Angela Lewis. Angela, do you want to say anything as a warm-up act, or do you want me to just jump into it?

AL: Well, welcome to my home here in Corsback.

SP: In Corsback – oh, excellent, all right, and we’ve got that in. Now, I know a little bit about some of the stories you’ve shared with me, but I know what’s particularly important to you – because you mentioned it before – is your earliest associations with Dunnet and the Brough Bay area, because you’re one of the few people who can claim ... going back many, many years ago.

AL: *(Laughs)*.

SP: So, what’s your earliest memory?

AL: I think – well, I was christened up here, but I was brought up down south. But we then came up for holidays. And I think the earliest memory I have is staying with my grandmother, Annie Calder, at Starbank, and her husband, William Coghill. And she was cooking on a fire, and there was a pot hanging on a hook, and that seemed quite normal. I didn’t see it as abnormal. I can remember the scullery at the back – not a kitchen, but a scullery – and they’d worked the water in such a way that it was rainwater coming into the house. There was no water – piped water – at that time.

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: To go to the toilet, I had to go to the byre, where the cows were – she had two cows. And there was a third stall, and the third stall had a – like, a wooden throne, and it smelt warm, and it smelt very milky. And that’s where you went to the toilet. Of course, at that time I didn’t know that she had to go in and empty the (1:59)

bucket underneath it every day, but ... no, it was a different way of life, because it was Tilley lamps. There was – as I say, there was no electric; there was no television. But then, at that age – and I'm talking about the late '40s, early '50s, the electric hadn't come and the water hadn't come, and there were very few cars. If a car came down a road, you'd hear it from miles away ...

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: ... and you'd rush to the window, and granny would as well. And we'd look through the net curtain – she had beautiful, heavy cotton net curtains – and we'd look through those, to see who it was. And, of course, it might be somebody on their tractor from up the way. Occasionally – very occasionally, you'd get a car. Tourists didn't really come up very much.

SP: I just have a question – you say you can hear the cars from a long distance. So, what was the surface of the road?

AL: I always remember it as being tarmacked, but I'm told that the tarmacking was quite late – sort of, 1930s.

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: I may be wrong in that. I know – I do remember some roads further west that were still like tracks, with grass growing up them.

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: But most roads, I think, were tarmacked by that time.

SP: OK. What was in the Tilley lamps – was that oil - paraffin?

AL: It was some kind of lamp oil, but I don't know what kind it would be.

SP: OK.

AL: I know that the only heat in the house was from the peat fire, and you had to keep getting peat to put on it. And when you undressed at night, put your pyjamas on, you undressed in front of the fire. And then you rushed to your bedroom and, if I was really lucky, I'd be allowed to sleep in my uncle's hammock.

SP: A hammock?

AL: Yes, he was – Uncle Sinclair – was in the merchant navy, and the Royal Navy actually, but in the merchant navy mostly, and he had a hammock, and I'd be allowed to sleep in that.

SP: What was that like, sleeping in a hammock?

AL: Fantastic! Because it was his – but you actually got a good sleep, too.

SP: Mmhmm.

(4:33)

AL: And he had it strung up in the bedroom.

SP: Was it canvas?

AL: Yes. A very – like a sail, sailcloth.

SP: OK.

AL: But very tough.

SP: OK. Because these days, I associate hammocks with, like, mesh, kind of, netting.

AL: No, no.

SP: But – no (???).

AL: Think of a sail ...

SP: OK.

AL: ... but a very tough sail ...

SP: Yeah.

AL: ... that's been very heavily stitched, and has got metal eyes in it.

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: The men slept in them on board ship.

SP: Mmhmm. So, did you come up every holiday?

AL: No, it was every second year.

SP: Every second year.

AL: Yeah, and we came from Luton in Bedfordshire, England, and in those days, well, we didn't have a car at the beginning, so we came by coach, and it took two days. And then my dad got a car – a Standard Eight – and – a sort of, sit-up-and-beg type car – and we left at four o'clock in the morning, and we made it to Glasgow by the end of the first day, and we stayed with somebody who I thought was not a real aunt, but was a friend of my mother's. I've now learnt that she was actually a fourth cousin, and that was Anne Cook, in Glasgow.

And we stayed there, and then we had a night's rest there, and the following day we'd come on up to Brough.

SP: And you always stayed at your grandmother's house?

AL: No, I stayed in Murkle as well. My great-aunt Ina was there – Alexanderina, was there – that's my grandfather's sister. (6:22)

SP: And her surname?

AL: She was a Coghill, but she then married and became a Barron. And I didn't know him – I don't remember him at all. So, we stayed with her for a day or two and – it wasn't again, 'til later, that I realised why my mother had spent all her schooling after the age of eleven with Alexanderina. And, in turn, each girl in the family had been sent to Aunt Ina's because she had no children of her own, so it made more space for my grandmother and it helped Aunt Ina to have somebody round the house.

SP: I see. So, I know I've seen a photograph of you feeding chickens.

AL: Yes!

SP: So, where was it you were feeding chickens – was it ...?

AL: Well, that was in Murkle.

SP: That was in Murkle?

AL: But I used to feed them in Brough as well.

SP: OK.

AL: I suppose my real proud moment was when I was allowed to feed the turkeys ... *(Laughs)* ... at the croft, which was just along the road – it's where Mick O'Donnell lived before his new house, and it's where my granny was born, and great-grandfather.

SP: Now, why were these turkeys so – eventful?

AL: Well, they were huge! I mean, to a little girl, they were huge. And they kept turkeys, and I think it was quite common to have turkeys.

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: Hens used to run around the road; they weren't kept in. The only hens that were kept in were the broody hens – well, not broody hens; they were put in a sack and tied to the washing line – but the hens that had got little chicks were kept in, like, little wooden cages, so the chicks could run in and out, but it kept the hen in one place. And so you'd have those on what was now the front lawn. There wasn't the fences like there is nowadays. So, for instance, Starbank, where we stayed with granny – that's the house that's got the whale rib arch over it in the summertime – to get to the front gate you had to go across a piece of slate, across a ditch, or dyke, we called it – and if you fell in, you got very dirty with messy stuff, because it was a system – a sanitation system, really.

SP: Oh, that must have been really manky!

AL: Yes! *(Laughs)*.

SP: So, where did that whalebone gate come from – what's the story behind that? (9:02)

AL: Well, I was always told that in grandfather's time, in the '30s, it was washed up on the shore, and he took three whale ribs and they were whitewashed and they were kept, and they've always been put up every year, in the summertime.

SP: Only in the summertime?

AL: Well, if you had them up in the winter, then they would be very quickly eroded ...

SP: OK.

AL: ... with the salt blast.

SP: So, you came up every second year from the time you were ...

AL: Born.

SP: Born, up until ...

AL: The year ... I suppose, it would be up until 1965. So – no, later than that, it would be about ... '65, '66 possibly. And then I had two or three years when I was away nursing, and I was training, and you didn't have holidays when you wanted them.

SP: I think that's probably still true of nursing!

AL: Yes! (*Laughs*). And, so, it wasn't ... I didn't really start that again until ... I suppose, '70s – '73, and I brought my husband up here for the first time.

SP: Oh, what was his reaction?

AL: I think he was quite taken aback at how – still fairly primitive it was, because even then it was possibly fifty years behind the rest of Britain, but very nicely so, in many ways. But, I mean, by that time of course the electric had come ...

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: ... and the water had come, and there was – and places had heating in them.

SP: And your grandmother's house – did you come to visit your grandmother's house at that time?

AL: Oh, yes, but my grandmother had died by that time.

SP: Yeah. (11:16)

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SP: OK, so you're talking about your connections with the area, but let's talk for a second, if that's all right, specifically about the beach and the Brough Bay.

AL: Mmhmm.

SP: So, did you spend time down there on your holidays?

AL: Oh, yes, most of the time. I learnt to swim down there; there's a sandy bit when the tide goes out. It didn't seem to be cold, climbing over the rocks. There's a fairy pool near the archway, you could go out to the Clett, and there wasn't the concern about children actually, sort of, hurting themselves. The one thing we had to do was to stay away from overhanging rock. We were never allowed to go near overhanging rock. I remember that from a very early age, never to go near overhanging rock. It's still there, mind, but never to go near it.

SP: Well, you don't want to be underneath it in the time it decides to let go ...

AL: I think that was possibly ...

SP: ... I think this is – that seems prudent.

AL: Yes.

SP: And I would be curious if you find the area the same now. Has it changed over the years?

AL: I think the change – although the houses are very much in the same place, the pathways have changed – the routes that you go have changed. For instance, as a child, to go from Starbank down the road to the beach, you always took the short-cut. And it's a right – it was a right of way. You went behind what is now Windhaven – that used to be the post office. That was where Cathy Begg held sway – held court, if you like. Everybody popped into the post office for a natter – bit of crack. And there was a path that went down the back, and it traversed across the brae, straight down to the beach. Now, that path has now slipped, but my mother used that path; I'm sure her mother did before her, and I did, before it was blocked off. It was blocked off, I think, when Windhaven was taken over by John Eaton and a tearoom was made.

SP: A tearoom? I've never heard about that before.

AL: Mmhmm.

SP: When was that?

AL: Where Dunnet Educational Trust is now, that's Windhaven. That was originally – after Cathy Begg had died, and – well, she went into care first, but – she went to Achvarasdal, first – but after she had died and it was for sale, then John Eaton bought it. He bought it for, about, ten thousand pounds, I think, and made a tearoom (2:43)

out of it.

SP: How long did that last?

AL: I can't remember how many years ...

SP: But it ...

AL: ... but it was quite a decent time.

SP: A good, long while, yeah.

AL: And certainly ... yeah, it was certainly some years, certainly over ten years, I would have said.

SP: Now I'm wondering about something, you know, you mentioned that it didn't seem that the adults were all that concerned about letting children in the water on their own. I wonder if that's your perception, just as a child and not being aware of people watching over you, or if ... times really were different. Now that you've had an opportunity to talk with some of the people later on, what would you think of that perspective now?

AL: I think, a mixture. Certainly, I was allowed to do more than my cousins were, who were younger than me, who were at least twenty years younger than me. And, certainly I would wander off on my own, and I'd wander off down to the beach, and I'd wander off up onto the hill. I'm sure there was an element of I wasn't aware of people looking out for me.

SP: Mmhmm.

AL: But people looked out for each other. So, if I was up on the hill, if I was up past Jessie Henderson at the corner, and I was up into the heather and maybe sitting and day-dreaming, then any people who'd seen me walking up that road – and they knew who I was, and they knew that I was home – and so they would keep an eye on you.

SP: Do you think there was also an element of discernment – by that I mean that there are some people you just know, even early on, are given more latitude because they've – either they are or they appear to be more responsible. I see that a lot operating these days – do you think that was an element in letting you roam the hills?

AL: Yes, possibly, possibly. I was a – I suppose I was quite a serious child, and quite – and being – I was quite tall, I was the tallest girl in school, so I was often mistaken for being older than I was, yeah.

SP: No, I know you were up here mostly on school holidays. You don't have necessarily school-mates, but who were some of the ...

AL: Oh, I did! (*Laughs*).

SP: ... other young people you played with?

(5:05)

AL: Next door to my grandmother was Daisy, and – Daisy Dunnet. She came from Melvich; I don't know what her maiden name was; she was married to John Dunnet. He taught me how to make cocoa. He taught me – when I was very little – poetry, songs, out ... He'd be digging in the front garden. I thought he was wonderful. They still had a box-bed and a cast-iron range as opposed to granny's hook down the chimney, so it was quite a, sort of, convoluted affair.

And she had children. And the eldest was Ian, and he was two or three years older than me, so ... at that age, two or three years is quite a lot, but his sister, Ishbel, I used to play with, and so we were always off playing together. Because the English holidays overlapped the Scottish ones, but sometimes they would be going back to school before I was going back down south, so then I missed her dreadfully.

SP: Did you?

AL Mmm.

SP: Yeah.

SP: Did you have a crush on Ian?

AL: Yes!

(Laughter).

SP: I could tell just even by the look on your face, all these years after that, that you clearly had a crush on him!

AL: And that ought to come out, I think.

SP: That'll – we'll delete that one out, if you like – yeah, yeah.

(6:42)

RECORDING 2 ENDS