Lewis Gavin, Slough

Publication/Creation

1993

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Catalogue No. 11

Lewis Den Munro Gavin

(*b.* 13 July 1916)
MB ChB (1939)
MD (Aberdeen, 1947); (MRCGP, 1968)

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Transcript of an interview conducted by:
Dr M.J. Bevan

So, Dr. Gavin, could you begin by telling me when and where you were born?

Yes. Banff, in, in Scotland, of course, Banffshire, yes. When? The 13th July, 1916.

And can you tell me something about your family?

On my father's side ... do you want trades, and occupations, and everything else? And shall I go back on my father's side, then?

Yes.

Well, he was Headmaster of Strichen (??sp) Secondary School in Aberdeenshire. He had a Classics, an Honours Classics Degree of Aberdeen University, and, do you want more details about him?

Yes.

All right. Okay. Well, he qualified round about 1912, I think, in Classics, and became a Classics Master at Banff Academy, and then was promoted, I think, it would be to Fraserburgh Academy. But, the odd thing was, that before he went to Fraserburgh where I was brought up in my younger days, was that he volunteered to go off to the War in 1914, and joined up as a private, became a corporal, and then, I don't know when he got wounded or anything else, but he was sent home. And in 1916, when I was born, was about the time that he was becoming an officer cadet. And he eventually went in as a second lieutenant, into the Gordons, and got into trouble again, I think he was wounded in the neck. He was certainly buried in, you know, the trenches, and sent home to recuperate. And when he had recuperated, he and 17 other Highland officers weren't allowed to go back to Flanders, and he was sent out to India, and became an ADC, no, Military Attaché, to the Governor General at Simla (?? sp), and was offered a job out there as a judge, but came home because I'd been born, and came back to Banff. All these fellas, those who survived, the very few who survived, were offered their jobs back. So he went back to Banff Academy and then, in 1920, it would have been, when I was four, we went to Fraserburgh, where he became Classics Master. And then when I was 12, you work the date out, he moved and became Headmaster at Strichen Secondary School. So that was him.

How long did he spend in India?

He must have been there from about '17/'18, a year, two years. I have some of his diaries, actually. And it was interesting ... these Highland officers went out to these jobs in India, well, not all Highland, because I know one was in the Buffs, that's the Royal West Ghents (?? sp.). They nearly all died of flu, that pandemic in 1918. So he was out there in 1918.

And could you tell me something about your mother, now?

Yes. My mother graduated also, M.A., at Aberdeen University, two years younger than my father, and, by the time the War had broken out in '14, she was a teacher down in Easington, near the famous Easington Colliery there. And I don't quite know when she gave that up, except they were married in Perth in, in 19, in July 1915. And then she went, having married, and stayed back in the house at Banff, where I was born, and then, you know, subsequently, she went, of course, with my father, through his various posts and the rest of it.

Do you remember anything of your grandparents?

Oh, yes. Very much so. My Gavin grandfather was Headmaster of a school called Drumwhindle, in Aberdeenshire. He had a small school that was, like so many of them in the country, and at the same time in Cornwall, the school house is part of the school. And I think he had a subsidiary teacher. But I just remember him as the Headmaster of this school, away in the depths of Aberdeenshire, real sort of Buchan country. He was an Elder of the kirk, as, as my father had been. He took a tremendous part in all the things that went on in the area. And he had the idea, and this would have been in the late, in the very early 1900s, I suppose, thinking of it, or, or further back than that, of getting plots of ground so that the boys of the school, and the girls who were interested, each had a plot of ground where they grew their own vegetables and everything else. So much so that he was mentioned in a thing called "The Blue Book of Scotland", and got a Fellowship of the Educational Institute of Scotland. He had no M.A. or any other degree. He had a teacher's training in some place in Edinburgh. And he was of a fairly large family. His father, before him, that's my great-grandfather, was a boat-builder in Aberdeen. And, having said that, I think, as a younger man, had sailed in the tea clippers to Australia, out of, with the Thermopoly (?? sp.), which was a, a sister ship of the Cutty Sark. One of the fast tea clippers. His father, before him, now that was William Gavin, my great-grandfather. My great-great-grandfather, was a James Gavin, who was a wheelwright and

turner in Fraserburgh. And his father, before him, a James, no wait, another William, was a farmer. And that takes us back to the late 1700s, or maybe mid-1700s.

And what about your grandmother, what do you remember of her?

Now, my, my, are we on the Gavin side?

Gavins.

Yes. She was an Alexander from Ellen (?? sp). Her family were a pretty well-known and established merchants, general merchant and grocers, and she came of Mackie, and she was a Jessie Alexander, but she came of Mackie and Ingram stock. And this, at the moment, is all being chased up. We know relatives ... I went to a funeral of an aunt in Aberdeen, a very old aunt, 98, two years ago, and a young undertaker, a chap about your age, came along, and introduced himself as a Mr. Ingram, and said ... my name is very well-known up there. He, he, he introduced himself and said he was a relative! But it's a question of the schedule of proof. I like to have it all in writing. So we just know they're Mackies and Ingrams, and are farming sort of people.

And what about your grandparents on your mother's side?

Yes. Well, my grandfather was a rope and sail maker, and my grandmother was a Frazer, and she came from the area of Bohorn (?? sp) which is near Elgin. And she came from families of Dices and Craigies. My grandfather Monroe, a rope and sail maker, was part of a business that had been established way back in 1600-odd, in Banff. And at the time when the herring shoals were thick round the Murray Firth, and so on, it was a very big and lucrative business, and he inherited something that, since sail was going out, was dying off. But the rope work he had, ran the length of a street in Banff. The land had been bought off the Earls of Findlater. It was just outside the Borough boundary, and this was, this area was, ran right down from where his house was built, right down to almost, a place called the Battery Green. And they made ropes and yarn. And as a young boy, I mean, I've, I've seen the whole thing still working. So he'd only two men with him by this time, and he was an elderly ... leading a rather nice retired existence. and on the money that the family had made in his father's time. Now, my great-grandfather was a Provost of the town, Royal and Ancient Borough of Banff. He also a rope and sail maker, but very much, you know, a fairly well-off man, making money from all the ropes and the sails and everything else. And I know from family records and letters that he had two farms, whether he had them both at the same time or not, I don't know, but he had one just on the hills outside McDuff, and another one along the shore on the west side of Banff, where recently I sold a property that I inherited there, from an uncle. His father before him was a Henry Monroe, and he was a weaver, but we don't know where he came from. And the family, elderly aunts who died only a year or so back, said, "Don't bother to trace, trace him", and I've had this also, we don't know what he was. Somebody, some people say he came up to Banff from London, and some others say that he actually originated in the Black Isle, which, of course, is Monroe country. I'm not sure. But that goes back to, well, several great-grandfathers.

And how about your grandmother?

Well, she was a Frazer, as I said, and came ... we don't know much about the Craigies or the, or the, or the other, that side, as a family. On the Monroe side, my ... my grandfather' mother was a Jessie Hosser (??) Cameron. And in the Annuls of Banff, there are quite a lot of details about the Camerons and the Craigies. And I know where the graves are in the very very old churchyard in Banff. Now you can't read the, you know, the stone. But I've got the actual, from the Annuls of Banff, we have the records of the family and the relationships, and everything else, which is what I'm writing up at the moment.

Would you say both sets of grandparents were well-off, relatively?

No. Not at all. Not the teacher's side. My grandfather had a marvellous life, and when he retired to Aberdeen (that's the Gavin grandfather), he took part in all sorts of things and he, he was a visitor to a very big ... Craiginches Prison, on the edge of Aberdeen in those days, it's now more in the middle of the town, the city, I should say. He was a County Councillor of Kindcardine, and he'd quite a bit to do with that great chunk of Kincardine, south of the River Dee, with a Lord Provost of Aberdeen, called Sir Henry Alexander, all that becoming part of Aberdeen, which it is now. A whole lot of Kincardineshire became part of Aberdeen. And he again, he'd, he, he was not at all well-off. Not at all well-off. But, anyway, he had a great social sort of life, in that respect, many of which, in his friends and so on. My father was a, a poor country schoolmaster, if you like, Headmaster. But had four of us to put through university, if he could. Managed two of us. And, on the Monroe side, yes, there was money, because the Trust

of which I, I've been dealing with up to a few years ago, has just finally discovered a very lost niece of mine, and handed over some money to her, from this old Trust. Yes, we all benefited a bit from it. Not a lot, you know, but ... helpful.

How often did you see your grandparents?

A lot, I think. I mean, as a, as a young boy, I, I used to cycle 20 miles odd, from Fraserburgh, to see them, on my mother's bike, with my father. And then, in the holidays, we always went to see them when we could. The time I didn't see so much of them was, of course, at university, when I very often went climbing with a friend in the Cairngorms, or over to other places. And, and then I was very much involved with the Officers Training Corps, because our local M.P, a certain Robert Boothby, who became Lord Boothby, kept telling us that, you know, there was definitely going to be a war with the Germans. So we, early on, my mother used to help out a lot with his campaigns up there, and he went on holiday every, every year, in the recess, Parliamentary recess, to Germany, and he knew what was going on all right. So I joined up and, and went off to the OTC camps and things, and then I didn't see so much of my grandparents then.

Did they play any part in your upbringing as a child, your grandparents?

Financially, no. But I got very strict instructions to keep my hands out of my pocket, and keep my back straight, and that sort of thing! (LAUGHS) No, they were just ... now that I'm writing up the family history, they were just such marvellous people. One keeps remembering now a lot about them, you know. The old benefit, if it was financial or anything else, my father, as I say, and my mother, had, had a job bringing us through, and that was a terrible recession in the thirties, you know. I remember fellas at the side of the road, breaking stones, and the rest of it, you know. It really was a pretty desperate time. And I had an aunt who hadn't married, because her young man hadn't come back from the First World War, and I had two aunts like that. And she sent me off on a schoolboy's cruise to Norway, just before I went to university. I think that was the only financial, that one knew of, anyway, from grandparents.

But they did give you other kinds of advice?

Oh, absolutely! Yes, oh yes. It was a damned good stock, I think, you know, that one came from. I'm only realising it now! (LAUGHS)

Would you say you were close to them at that time?

Yes. Oh yes. It was really good family connections and things.

You mentioned that there were four of you in your family.

Yes. Yes.

How many brothers did you have?

One. One. And he was killed as a bomber pilot on the very last raid of the War, in Europe, in his second tour of duty. They, very few of them survived two tours, and he went off on this last raid. My grandfather told me he thought that Keith, my brother, may well have volunteered for it, because he was like that. But he never came back.

Was he older than you?

No, six years younger. He was at school, in fact, and then went off, volunteered.

So he went straight from school ...

He went straight from school and did his training over in the States and Canada, and then came back and took part in all sorts of raids. I've got a good deal from, a history of the raids he went on. I only met him once during the War, when I had come back for a short time. It turned out to be nine months, but I, I, I was only home for that short period, and he came over to the Aldershot Command to see me, and then went off again, back to his station. Never saw him again.

Were you particularly close to him, although there was a six year age-gap.

Well, a six year gap, yes. Yes, we were. But, of course, I didn't see so much of him, because of the gap and being away at university and so on.

What sort of career do you think he would have followed?

I don't know. He was, unlike me, he had tremendous mathematical ability. There was no doubt about this. And this is why, I think, he rose up in the Air Force right through, apart from surviving, he became a navigator and the rest of it, and then went on, became a, he was a Warrant Officer when he was killed. There was talk of, of forestry, and that sort of thing. He was very much an outgoing sort of chap. Difficult to say. He might well have gone in and done medicine, you know, I think, you know, my father and my mother might well have .... up, up

there in Scotland, one seemed somehow to manage these things, if people had an inclination that way.

So you had two sisters?

Two sisters. One who was at university when I was, taking a general M.A. - English, French, I suppose, that sort of thing. Two years younger than me. She's still alive. I don't, she didn't do an awful lot of teaching, because she married, again, must have been just towards the end of the War, and is now up in a place called Roka (sp/ph??) where she's got a lot of grandchildren nearby. My other sister, again, two years younger than her, four years younger than me, qualified as a nurse, and then made a very unhappy marriage, which eventually led to her suicide. And it's her niece that, who I've just happily been tracing up after years of the family solicitor in Scotland and myself, tracing up this young lass who was thrown out of her, her home, when her father remarried a stepmother. It's all a very sad story, in fact.

How long ago did she commit suicide?

That would have been about 1955. If you wanted the exact date, I, I can, I can get it.

Were you close to your sisters?

Yes. Very much so, and still am, you know, we still ring each other, my surviving sister. And I've had some of her grandchildren down here to show them the sights of London and everything else. Very exhausting, I may say!

What sort of house did you live in, as a child?

Well, the grandparents' house was quite a large one, it's now been ... the one I was born in, has now been split into two. And it had a steam engine to drive the ropeworks, and hen houses and coal bunkers, and all that sort of thing. That was quite a big house. In the, the house, as I remember, when we went to Fraserburgh, we stayed in the central School House, which was quite a large house, because my father, obviously, was waiting to find a house. Then we were in two other houses in Fraserburgh, which were quite sizeable. There was no cramping and everything else. Always rooms for my brother and I in one room, and my two sisters in the other, if that's what you're after. And we, eventually, the School House in Strichen, was, was quite a large, a nice School House, you know, one of these granite sort of places. The School Houses were never as big as the Ministers' Manses, the Ministers always had even bigger houses still, which, I think, became an embarrassment to the Church of Scotland! But, if that's the sort of thing you're after, yes.

Did you have any maids?

Yes. We had a maid at the School House, usually. One of the village girls. God knows what, what they were paid! But, when I qualified in, in July '39, I'm not jumping there, as a house surgeon at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, I was getting £4-7-6d. a month, I think, £52 a year. And that was a great honour to have been picked for a house job at a, at a teaching hospital, so to speak.

Just going back to your parents, did they consider certain things important in life? I'm thinking of things like manners, the way you spoke?

Oh, oh, very much so. Oh yes. And, you know, our maid had a little frilly hat, and a, a black sort of dress, and a, a little apron, and the rest of it. Oh yes. And, you see, there were only three people that mattered in a village like that, and that was the, as they used to say, "The Doctor, the Dominee, and the Divine" - the Minister, and the doctor, and, and the Dominee, my, my father. So that you, you always had a sense that, you know, you had to comport yourself. And I always, and the rest of us, had to speak good English in the house, whereas down in the village, with the village boys, I spoke Buchan, and I, I'm told I still speak Buchan pretty well, but with an English accent, which is very upsetting!

So would you say your parents were strict, or not?

My father was, because he was a schoolmaster. And he was, he was always sort of ... I was always conscious of the fact that, especially at school, and everything else, and I suppose both my brother and I were fairly alert and active chaps, and he just felt he had to, to, you know, keep us in order. But when you talk about strictness, you've got to realise that it was an odd education in that, in the fifth and sixth forms, there were two boys in the class, there was myself and the son of a shepherd and a crofter, that is, he was a shepherd, he kept sheep mostly, he was on the edge of a, what we call a "peat moss", and five girls. And, you know, it was tutorial stuff. So there was never any question of much discipline having to be ... but, on the other hand, if I felt that my father was sometimes strict, I think a lot of chaps in this, of

that generation, I think, always felt their fathers were. If we went off fishing, or anything like that, it was just the best of companionship.

Were you expected to behave in certain ways towards your parents?

Yes. Yes. Yes. I mean, and to any of your elders, they were always "Sir", and, and so on. And I was "Master Lewis". My father's name was also Lewis, so I was "Master Lewis", and he was "Mister Gavin", to the maid. And we had a very pretty maid, and when the Minister came once to see us, I remember my mother being terribly upset because, at the door, when the Minister came, he, he asked for, he stuttered and slurred his speech a bit, for "Mister Gavin", and by this time I was probably 16 or 17, and she said, "Do you want big Lewis or little Lewis?" And my mother was most upset about that! (LAUGHS) Yes, there was a formality about it.

Did your parents expect you to achieve certain things in life?

No. Looking back, I suppose they thought that one would, anyway. It sounds awful, that. I wasn't really terribly good at school. I passed out, I mean, I got five what were called "Highers" in Latin and Greek and French, English, and something else would be the fifth thing. Certainly not science. I mean, I went to university knowing Pb and $H_2$0, and the science side was, was very lacking. But I took my First MB, of course, and just had to work damned hard to, to work up on that.

So they didn't have any great ambitions for you to ...

Well, no. It was discussed. I, I was pretty keen to go soldiering. That was a possibility, except that to be a Gordon Highland officer, you really needed an income of about £300 a year. I remember that being discussed, which was absolutely out. I know my father's salary was something like just £900. He had a thing called the "Dick Bequest" which put him up, but I don't think he ever reached about a thousand pounds a year, in his particular ... and he ran, virtually, two schools, you know, he had the whole of the schooling in the village. And when he retired, they, that school was written off. The senior pupils went to Fraserburgh Academy.

But was it expected that you should go into a profession?

Absolutely. Oh yes, that, that was always it. And I, I wasn't keen on the teaching side. The Church was mentioned, but quickly dismissed, though at that time I could read the New Testament in Greek, and both my father and I had prizes from a thing, I think it was called the McAulay Institute, where you could translate the New Testament from the Greek into English, and vice-versa, you could, you got things [doorbell - Excuse me]

... for their daughters?

I think so. I mean, my sister took her M.A. with a view, no doubt, to teaching. And that's my, my elder sister. And then the, the other one, became a nurse. So again, her education, as it were, was a bit disturbed, because my mother died in, in my first year at university. And, of course, my sisters suffered a lot from the loss of their mother at that time. But it was always expected that we would all go into the professions.

Did they have to return home, then, or something, to look after the others?

No. I think my, my younger sister had a, was disturbed, her schooling and everything else was disturbed a bit. We, the, the household was taken over by an aunt, for some time, one of my mother's sisters, who, to say the least of it, was a disturbed sort of person.

In what way?

Well, she was a, a rather a wild sort of character. Difficult to explain. She was, she was well-meaning, but she was one of these big bossy types, and quite different from my Mum, and so I think, though I was away from home, I, I do think my, my sisters suffered a bit. And then my father remarried a most delightful person, and things settled down again after that.

So this would have been in the thirties?

Yes, late thirties.

Did you talk much to your mother and father when you were at home?

Absolutely, oh yes. Very much so. Especially my mother. When I got home from school, she and I always went for a walk down into the village and back, or whatever. Or up the hill, and just discuss the day's events and things like that. And she wrote frequently to me when I was a student. And my father, not so much in those days, I mean, he was schoolmastering, but when we all left home, we had, apart from the exigencies of war, we had a letter every week. He wrote, in a very very fine script, to us all.

Did you feel that you were able to share your worries with them?

With my mother, yes. Not so much my father. But he was going through a rotten time, because he got a thing that, I'm sure now, was a polymyalgia rheumatica (?? ph), which, at that, his rheumatism at that time was put down to his war, his being buried in the trenches and the rest of it. But he, he, he had a pretty difficult time. *[End of Tape 1 - Side A]* ... excellent companionship. And the funny thing I used to notice, we could go hours without talking to each other, but it, it, it was a, it was a wonderful feeling, you know.

Could you tell me something about their religion? You mentioned that the grandfather was an Elder of the kirk?

Yes. Yes. And my father was. Very much, again, taking, you know, part in village affairs, as he would anyway.

Was this Church of Scotland?

Yes. Yes. Very much so. The Arl (?? ph) Kirk.

And did you attend church regularly?

Yes. And it, and it was looked on as just a family ... how shall I say? Routine, in that we went to church in the morning, which was a mile or two out of the village. We walked all the way there. And then, in the afternoon, latterly, as a boy, I became a Sunday School teacher, which was Sunday afternoon. And then, in the evening, there was another church, because there had been a sort of combination, there was the Evening Service, and we thought nothing odd about ...

So the entire family went?

Oh no. I wouldn't say that. That varied a bit. And I wouldn't say that, you know, I would go every time. But then we had a very close association, again, with the local doctor and with the local minister, who was a very very fine man.

How long had your father been an Elder of the kirk?

Oh, I suppose since the time ... he may have been one in Fraserburgh. He, he, he quite possibly was one in Fraserburgh, before we moved. But he certainly would have been from the time we went to the village, when I was 12. Now, which year was that?

1928?

Yes.

Was he involved in church work a lot, then?

No, I wouldn't have said a lot, no. He was often, I think it's difficult to say how often the minister came to him, to consult him, and vice-versa, but, you know, they were in and out of each other's houses, and he gave lectures on this, that, and the other. As I say, he was, his rheumatism restricted him terribly, until his retirement in later life, and then he was able to, you know, he got on very well. I think it burnt out, and I think this is why it was polymyalgia (?? ph/sp).

And was religion important to you then?

I think, as an enquiring mind, yes. And certainly, because, in support of my father, who had done this for years, I did this extra study, you might say, of Biblical Greek and, and so on.

And, moving on to politics, did your father take an interest in politics?

Interest in, but he wasn't, shall we say, to my knowledge, terribly active. I think, as a schoolmaster, as I was, as a doctor, later, one didn't want to sort of feel that one should noise one's feelings abroad. But my mother, certainly, I know, used to help the famous Robert Boothby, because she often got me to address stacks and stacks of envelopes, for, you know, stuff going out to publicise his meetings, to the farmers and the fishermen of Buchan.

This was at election times?

Yes, yes, yes.

Did she do any work outside of election times?

No. No, no. I don't think so.

Was your father of the same political persuasion?

Pretty certainly, yes, yes. There was...*[CAN'T CATCH - 46]* up in that area, an alternative to, I mean, the, they were some ... one didn't hear much about the Labour, if I can call it that side of things, at all. A local chemist was very much ... a very clever, most delightful man. I remember his name, it was Arley (?? sp.) Alexander, and Boothby, I'm sure, used to look forward to the meetings in the Village Hall, because those two, he, this chap heckled Boothby away, and they used to laugh and have a great time! (LAUGHS). It was really quite an entertainment, you know, in those days.

What sort of social group, or class, would you say your family belonged to, in that area?

Oh, one didn't think about it very much. We hadn't any sort of titled land people in our area, but we had a lot of very wealthy farmers, what we called "Bonnet Lairds", in other words, they owned a lot of land, sent bulls to the Argentine for breeding, and the rest of it, and were well-off. But, and they were really our landed neighbours. And we were looked on at, at that sort of level, I suppose. Just, just somewhere in the middle, middle-class. We had, we had, you know, there were one or two families we knew of, but we didn't associate with them very much. I certainly didn't. My brother used to go regularly to the Laird of Brockley, whose name I've forgotten, Digwall Fordyce, I think it was, a very nice man. And my sisters used to go to tea to the Urquharts of Craigston, a very very old family, but, in fact, related to the fellow Urquhart who wrote the Rabbelly (?? ph). The Urquharts of Cromarty they were, originally, that linked up there in history, but that was because through school friends connections.

So you mixed occasionally with the ...

Yes.

... the landed ...

Very occasionally, yes. Yes. In those days. My grandfather in Aberdeen, my grandfather Gavin, he mixed quite a lot with Lord Aberdeen, that was the Marquis of Aberdeen and Temare (sp??), because he was a great horticulturalist, my grandfather, the one who'd retired, and I told you, did a lot of County Council work and stuff. And he was often asked for his advice by these landed people, about landscaping their gardens, and he'd just be invited, because he was a very interesting character to talk to, and was, at that time, well before the War, giving radio programmes. I heard him on 2LO or something, in the, locally, anyway, on one of these little crystal sets, I remember listening to him giving a gardening thing. And he had a weekly column in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Lewis Gavin's "Gardening Notes". He did this in his retirement. He was very well-known in that respect.

As a child, where did most of your friends come from? Were they a mixture?

Well, you see ... No. In Fraserburgh, there were a bunch of us. One was the son of the, a timber merchant who made wood for kipper boxes, and the rest of it, again, this was the fishing side of things. One was the son of a banker, that would have been the, not the Bank of Scotland, that would have been, no, sorry, North of Scotland Bank, North of Scotland Bank in those days. Another was the son of a local solicitor who, at the same time, was also a banker to the Clydesdale Bank. Another friend was the son of a Headmaster of one of the schools in Fraserburgh, and this boy himself became a banker in the, the Commercial Bank of Scotland. That sort of level. Other professional families, if you like. Of that sort, mmmm.

Are those ...

Another was the son of a ... coal merchant. And then there was a Jean Bruce, who was a friend of my sister and myself, and she was the sister of George Bruce, a very well-known poet, and he was with the BBC in Scotland for many years. I mean, he's got a Collective Book of Poems and so on, and he's written very touchingly about Fraserburgh in some of his poetry, and so on.

Did your parents expect you to draw your friends from that group?

I suppose so. I got into trouble, and I remember an Inspector of Schools for Scotland, my father must have invited him in, and he was very friendly with one or two of them, for an evening meal. And I came back with a great long stave and a, a tin that had been put on the end, as a sort of guard, and I had been running around with some gang, down in Broadsea, or somewhere in Fraserburgh, and, you know, not at all what I should have been doing. No, I, I did mix with the, with the village. And, of course, I mixed with the village boys, and if I didn't speak Buchan to them, you know, I'd have been looked on as very priggish or, or pompous, or something. And, and they were real trouble-makers, a lot of those. They all went off and became either, mostly policemen in Palestine or Hong Kong! (LAUGHS) That's where a lot of our trouble-makers went. Or they joined the Gordon Highlanders. That was always the other ...

What would happen to you if you did something your parents disapproved of?

I, my mother would, you know, really go for me. But in the, you know, it was forgotten as soon as ... my father was very strict, and I, I have been, I got properly called "The Tag" in Buchan, that is, "The Taws" (?? sp.), I think, in English, is it?

Yes.

But only, I think, once. And I was a bit fed up, because it, it was the, it was the other boy who'd been doing the talking, as it so happened. He had a terrible stutter, this shepherd's son. He went on and became an advocate in Aberdeen, and I always wondered what he did about his stutter. But, in school, whispering ... for singing, he was perfect, I mean, they didn't realise that this talking going on was him, because when he stood up to answer any question in class, you know, his stutter was frightful. Before he went into the local Post Office, he had to recite what he wanted, and then go in and shout it out in a loud voice! (LAUGHS) So I felt very wronged in those days! (LAUGHS) But no, one never felt that one was ever, you know, except on that one occasion, chastised very improperly, or anything else. I never felt my parents, I always felt that, you know, one got what one deserved.

Were there many books around the house?

Oh yes. Oh yes. Both my parents were, my father had an awful lot of work to do outside the school, you know, his programming, the curriculum and, and the rest of it. And, of course, he ran, in Fraserburgh, before we moved to his other school, he ran evening classes. So really, really he was running two schools in his younger days. And he was a very athletic chap before his rheumatism really hit him, but, and ... ... but certainly reading. But I do remember that in the very early, in our very young days, we only read certain books on, I had only certain books allowed on Sunday. I distinctly remember this.

What were they, can you remember?

No. No. Not at all. I think I was probably allowed, allowed to read Arthur Mee's *Childrens' Encyclopaedia*, I think. That, that was an absolute, you know, I, that was a book I read all the time. I loved it. No, I can't remember what the others were now, but they all had a Biblical content, you know.

What sort of things did you read outside Sundays?

Well, I remember when the *Boys' Own Paper* came out, one managed to get hold of that. And that, and then there was a magazine I tried to get hold of whenever I could, that was always full of adventure tales. I, do you remember what it was? I mean, it's gone now, but it was, it was something to do, it was written by chaps, you know, who went out to the South Seas, and ... I met types like that later on in my career, fellas who took, who went out and sailed around the Coral Sea, and the Timor Sea, and went to plantations.

Was that the sort of books which appealed to you at that time?

Yes, oh very much so, yes. And to my brother, I think, yes. Yes. And after all, I mean, everybody who was being schooled with a view to going out to the Empire, to the Raj, or whatever, up in our part of Scotland, if the farm servants didn't get a fee on a farm, you know, they changed over every, at markets, feeing markets. And if the recruiting sergeants of the Gordon Highlanders were there, and they took the Kings Shilling and off they went to the Gordons, and they were out in the Khyber Pass before they knew where they were sometimes!

So, if they couldn't get work on the farms then ...

That's right.

... the recruiting sergeants would sign them up for the Army?

Oh yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Oh yes, a lot of them went off. Damned good soldiers they made, too. I mean, a very very tough countryside that, you know, you're brought up to be pretty hardy.

What other sort of things did you do as a child?

Well, I was fairly lonely in a way, because this shepherd's son, he had about six miles to come to school, as indeed, all the girls in my class, the five of them, cycled long distances to school. And if, in the winter, they couldn't get to school, lessons had been prepared. There was always reading that, that would be done, and so on. I went walking a lot. And in the summer, our local doctor in Fraserburgh, a tremendous chap called Dr. Slessor, he and my father, and a banker, and then others, all went and holidayed on Lord Lentanner's (??sp) land, on the River Dee, near, near a town called Didett (?? sp.). So we were on the other side of the water, and we camped there for about a month. And the doctor took his manservant, who was an asthmatic he looked after, and he, he, he might as well not leave him to have a locum in Fraserburgh, and he'd take this asthmatic with him. Old Haddon was a sort of factotum to the doctor. And the doctor, we all went climbing mountains like Loch Negar (?? sp.) and so on. The doctor and my father and I, and one of the other boys, fished. And we went on expeditions. And it was just a wonderful holiday camp that we had every year. The families all mucked in together, in tents,

and, you know, it was, it was a wonderful upbringing. And we, we met strange children who came. There was a doctor's daughter from Northern Ireland came over. There were two younger men, this is in my student days who, I remember, had a, a small ... *[CAN'T CATCH - 217]*, I can't remember whose relations they were. But we were all relatives of friends. And I think this is one of the reasons, seeing the sort of life that this Dr. Slessor led, made me pick for doctoring.

So the entire family would go on these holidays?

Yes. Yes. Oh yes. Yes. Yes. But then I would disappear. I would be off to the OTC Camp, and then I'd also, I, I was fencing at university, so I'd, I'd maybe, you know, be off on, on something like that. But as we got older, us boys used to go off on our own and climb some of the higher hills. That sort of thing.

Were there many family outings?

You mean our family?

Yes.

Otherwise than this?

Yes.

Yes. To, to grandparents. To grandparents, and usually not to any other relatives, because the relatives, my aunts and uncles, my uncles were at sea, and my aunts were teaching elsewhere in Scotland. So it was grandparents, yes.

Did your parents do any entertaining at home?

Yes. Yes. I, I remember particularly, I can even now remember, and could, to my wife, and she's got used to it, some of the dishes my, my mother used to do. (LAUGHS) And, funnily enough, it was only two or three days ago, I, I said to my wife, who's thinking about entertaining people at the weekend, I said, "Well, what about beef olives?" which was a thing my mother regularly turned out. (LAUGHS)

Who would they invite?

Well, one was a great friend of my father's, because he also fished, was a Mr. Monroe, who was the Arts Master at Fraserburgh Academy, and those are four of his paintings there, that were left to my mother. He, he was a great chap. And when my father's rheumatism was bad, I would go fishing with him. He had a tent up one of the nearby rivers, and we stayed there, and we fished, and I sketched, because I was keen to do what he did, too, you know the sort of thing. A wonderful man. And the other people were usually the minister, and again, I'm thinking of, of both the village my father was Headmaster in, and before that, in Fraserburgh, the doctor, and, and friends. Again, the families whose sons I have been talking about - the chap who made kipper boxes, and so on. But not, not in a great style, you know. There was none, there was none of the sort of entertaining we would now feel would be the proper thing.

Would they just be invited for a meal?

Yes, an evening meal.

Was any member of the family ever seriously ill, while you were a child?

Well, apart from my father who was restricted a lot, I mean, he had to cycle to school when he would have preferred to walk. And we had a mounting block so he could get on to his bike. You know, he was stiff all over, especially in the mornings. My brother fell down and cracked his skull, but no, we had the childhood ailments, and that, that was about it, until my mother got very very bad gallstones when I was at university, my first year, was operated on, and died, they said, of a pulmonary embolism. So that, that was the only serious thing. I can remember a, a minor operation on one of my sister's heels. No, no, no serious illnesses.

Because of your father's illness, was the doctor around the house regularly?

Oh Lord, no. Not unless it was to have a chat, or, or try and get a whisky! Because he was an alcoholic.

He was an alcoholic?

Oh, a terrible alcoholic! He'd, he was the most delightful man. He had an Honours Degree in Classic, First Class Honours, I think. Was a superb musician, a wonderful pianist, but he, he went into medicine. He also had a tremendous gambling instinct as well. He, he just was a chap who was, probably shouldn't have been a village doctor. But I went up, I went up to see him, I went up to see him about family business two years ago, and found he was still alive. And it was a great delight to see him, he'd given up the alcohol, and he'd, he'd had family problems. His wife had left him and everything, and he, he had taken up with a disabled boy, I think a

cerebral palsy young man, whom he'd befriended, and he told me he was leaving all his money to this lad, to look, see him through the future.

When you were ill, as a child, what sort of remedies were you given, if you didn't call the doctor too often?

Well, I do remember my first time I really felt bad was when I was looked after by a girl called, her surname was McHattie, I think it was Alice, was my sort of nanny. And that was having warm olive oil poured into my very very painful ear. I obviously had an acute otitis media, and then the thing was plugged with cotton wool, which was disastrous treatment! (LAUGHS) And then, after that, I went through things like hepatitis, yellow jaundice as it was called in those days. And then I had the usual mumps and measles, and everything else. And I think I must have had polio, and I, I won't enlarge on that, but we now know that when the whole of us, of our family got polio, I was the only one who didn't, and that may have accounted for a relative weakness of my shoulder muscles. We're not, we're not certain.

What did people, in that part of the world, do as regards medical care?

Well, Fraserburgh with its herring, fishing fleet and so on, had good doctors, and a good lot of them. And once I'd decided to become a doctor, Dr. Slessor very kindly took me, so I was just a student, and I, I went to his surgeries and saw his patients with him. And, of course, he was a man who, some years, wasn't paid by his people. He waited till they'd good catches and a good year, and then he got his money.

But out in the countryside it must have been difficult for people ...

In the countryside it was different. They were pretty well-off. They were used to living on the farms, you know, they had their own eggs, their own meat and, and the rest of it. And we ourselves always kept a barrel of meal and stock, candles and the rest of it, because you could get snowed up for a fortnight, you see, as they have been just recently, the other week. And, no, I wouldn't, one wasn't conscious of an awful lot of poverty. One knew that people were poor, but it was relative. I mean, we, we had meatless days ourselves, and my father would be the only one who, who had the meat, at certain times of the week. But we were always pretty well fed, well, we must have been, on ... we'd always plenty eggs, and fish, of course. And doctors, to some extent, were paid in kind.

Were they?

Oh yes, very much so. Oh yes. You're, I mean, so were we, my wife and I. In Northampton, she did marvellous business with people wanting to get certificates for corsets and for whisky as a medicinal drink and the rest of it. And, you know, all sorts of stuff was brought in.

Up in Scotland, how would people pay the local doctor in kind? What sort of things would they bring?

Well, you know, he'd get eggs, or peat, he'd be supplied with peat, as my father was. And gifts of that sort.

Can you tell me something about your education now?

Mmm.

How old were you when you first went to school?

I must have been four and a half, or five. And I went to Fraserburgh Infants School, where the Headmistress, called Miss Duffas (Duffers?? sp.) had told me that I was going to be Prime Minister. I remember making birds nests and things out of clay, but I don't remember much else about the, about the infants school, at all, but it must have been a damned good schooling, I think. And then I also went to a, a Sunday School, where one brought a peat for the fire, and a penny, and that was to a Miss Rose, down in Broadsea, which was the coastal part of Fraserburgh, who had a Sunday School for little children.

Where did you go after Fraserburgh Infants?

And then, then Fraserburgh Central School, where one had, I think it must have been a pretty good education, pretty strict. Miss Wood was a very strict lady, but a damned good teacher. She was the daughter of our local M.P., or an M.P for somewhere in that area. Very, very fine woman. And then one went, at about 11, I suppose it would have been, to Fraserburgh Academy, but I was only there about a year, where a Miss Elder taught me Latin. She was my father's junior. He was Classics Master there, and Deputy Head, and, and he was, he was often ... ran the school, very strictly, much more strictly than he did when he had his own one. But if there was any row in a class with these tough fisher boys, and tough fisher girls, he just said, "You, you, you", so that, you know, you could be doing something quite innocuous, but you were taken out, and you were the one that got the punishment. So that kept people pretty quiet! (LAUGHS)

So you were only at Fraserburgh for a year?

About a year, I should think, yes. And then my father was given his Headship at Strichen Secondary School, and I went there, and was there until I went to university.

Was that the only reason he moved, was through that promotion, because of the Headship?

Oh yes. He had applied for Ellen (?? sp.) Academy. Ellen Academy and Strichen Secondary School came up about the same time, and he got Strichen. And Mr. Lipp, who was the science master at Fraserburgh, have I got that right? Yes, I think he was, he got Ellen (??sp.).

What was your schooling like under your father's Headmastership?

Well, I think I must have disappointed him. I did well on the Biblical thing and everything else, I worked specially at that. But I always tell people I was third in Greek, but, of course, there were only three in the class! Latin was all right. I mean, I even got to the stage of doing the odd Latin verse and things. I think, I think the education was very good, obviously on a tutorial level. I suppose there were only about five of us taking Latin, or less, because some of the girls, the farmers' daughters, they were going on back to the farms. One or two, of course, my father had some girls who went off into the Civil Service. One or two got, you know, pretty high grades. That was the other thing that happened from our school, there was some connection there with Civil Service appointments.

Would you have preferred not to have been taught by your father?

No. Not looking back now. No, not a bit. No. I think we had a damned good education. And, of course, one or two of the other boys, who had been under my father, did extremely well. Very well indeed.

What sort of curriculum did you follow?

How do you mean?

Well, what sort of subjects did your father teach you?

Well, he taught me Latin and Greek. Then we had an English mistress, and a French mistress, and the first French mistress spoke French with a Buchan accent, I don't think she'd ever been to France. It was, it was deplorable. But she was replaced by the most wonderful woman who was the daughter of a Roman Catholic minister, I think. Anyway, she played us gramophone records, and spoke French fluently herself, and got an ... *[End of Tape 1 - Side B]* The art mistress was hopeless at art, and through my mother's friend, Mr. Monroe, and so on, I'd, I'd, and I've inherited it from both sides of the family, we, we really didn't get on at all well. She used always want to fudge things and alter them and everything else. But she, fortunately, went abroad to Madras, or somewhere. A lot of the, the teachers, went to Alexandria or Madras, all the rest of it, from the Scottish schools. They were often in fairly minor teaching jobs, some of the junior schoolmistresses, but had good degrees, M.A.'s, B.Sc.'s and things like that. Anyway, I did ... oh, and our science and mathematics master was an oddity. He was a throwback to an early Pict, I think. He certainly came out of the bogs. He, he was the most remarkable man, with his arms hanging away down below his knees, when he stood erect, and a face that was, well, Neanderthal, almost, it, it was ... an astonishing chap. A very very good brain, but between trying to teach us early science and maths, he ran what he called a one-horse farm, but we would have called just a croft, and he ran that with a, a spinster sister, miles away from the school. So, you know, he wasn't giving his whole time to, to his schooling. But I took, I took Highers in five subjects anyway. And I, I, you know, quite good passes.

Did you take science subjects amongst those?

Well, I, I took, I took maths, yes, but I can't make out that I'd any knowledge of science, as I jolly well knew when I went to do it in, in Aberdeen, to do the first MB in Aberdeen, well, you had to do medical chemistry and medical physics.

When you were at school, as a teenager, let's say, early teens, what sort of career were you thinking about following?

I wasn't much, you see, except the ones I've mentioned. There was the odd family discussion, and "What's Lewis going to do? Is he going into the Church, or is he ... you know ... ", well, the soldier thing was soon squashed when they discovered, you know, because the Gordon Highlanders have, you know, they're like the Guards in, in England, they're, they're kept as a very well-established in all the landed family and people with money are still, as far as I know, it's a tradition. And my father, of course, had been a Gordon Highlander. And it was in the family beforehand, on the, but the Frazers and everything else, they'd all had family traditions. I mean, I, I could write a small booklet on my so many greats ... grandfather William Frazer,

who was at the Battle of Waterloo, went through the whole Peninsular Campaign, went soldiering with ninety trois(??sp.) that's the 92nd Gordon Highlanders, through the whole of the Peninsular Campaign, something like 15 skirmishes and battles, ending up being wounded twice at Waterloo.

So you'd have been happy to follow in the family tradition?

Oh yes. I'd, I'd always, yes, yes. But my family couldn't have afforded it. I mean, I would obviously have, they'd have wanted me to be officer class, and not go in through the ranks, as it were.

Who would you say had the biggest influence on you at that time?

I think my mother. Probably to be fair to my father, because he was being two things at once, he was being the Headmaster, my Classics teacher, and my father, you see.

You said that he was disappointed in your performance at school?

Oh, only in Greek!

But he let that show?

I suppose so. I think so, but I think he would have told my mother more than he would have told me, I think. They both, I may say, helped me tremendously. I remember now, before this bursary competition, with an attempt to get a Scholarship, my mother taught me a good deal, I mean, she'd taken Classics at university. And there was an odd thing happened, you had to have Greek to go to St. Andrews, and I've just remembered, the local, well, he was a laird of a sort, but he was, in fact, factor to Lord Salton, that's the Frazers of Fullorth (?? sp.), a very old family, their two boys, Finnister and Ian, wanted to go to St. Andrews, through some family connection, and my mother took them, tutored them for Greek. They came from their house about six miles, and I remember them coming with their kilts on and everything else, and being tutored in Greek, and they, you know, to bring them on to, to get a pass to get in to be accepted. Just as to get into Aberdeen, we had to have at least Lower Mathematics. You weren't accepted otherwise, in those days.

What was it that inspired you to take up medicine?

The, this rather eccentric Dr. Slessor, my father's great friend, and our family doctor in Fraserburgh, who kept on being a friend until the day he died. He came and visited me here in his eighties. He wasn't a wealthy man, but he behaved as if he was. He dressed in the most odd way. He got up at all hours, very often, as I know, to my cost, he hadn't gone to bed if he'd been up all night, as I sometimes did as well! And he lived the life that just seemed so different from the staid life that everybody else had. I mean, he'd be out beachcombing, and going along the beach and coming back with wood or something he'd found, in the early morning, before he had his morning surgery, that sort of thing. And then he, he had these summer camps where we all went climbing, and I got the chance of fishing and some of the best fishing in Scotland, on the River Dee. A thousand pounds a week now, I think. And I got it for nothing. And the, also the fact that he had about four cars, because he was never quite sure which was the one that was going to go. But when we got old enough, he'd lend these cars to us boys, and we'd go as far as Ben Nevis, you know, to climb Ben Nevis and hills over on the West. He'd let us take one of his cars and go, go off in it. So, you know, there was a certain feeling that, you know, that was a pretty good life. Now the thing that could have been off-putting was that the doctor's house was across the road from us, and in the very big snowstorms when the whole village, one heard the garage, the doctor often trying to de-freeze his garage door, to take out a sledge, which was shaped like a boat, which was hauled by a horse. And Simpson, who was a retired Gordon Highland sergeant major, who lived in a little cottage next to the doctor's, or across the road from the doctor's, would be there, and if they couldn't get the sledge out in the snow, they'd go on horseback, and Simpson was there, of course, to help the doctor if he fell off his horse, and so on.

When would this have been?

Well, this was in, you know, up till the time I was a, up till '38. No, I beg your pardon. That's, that's wrong. Up till, I went to university in '34, so I, I'm talking about '30-'34, that sort of time. And, you know, when you realised he was going out to a maternity case or, or whatever, it, one knew that, you know, if you were going to be a general practitioner or whatever, and certainly in those areas, it was, it was a damned tough life.

But the other factors outweighed all of that?

Oh, indeed, yes. Oh yes, yes. And I always thought that the reason, when it just gelled in my mind that I wanted to do it, because I think the, it's, thinking afterwards about the effect Dr. Slessor had. I read Warren Deepings *Sorrel and Son*, I must read it again, because I can't think, I'm sure that something influenced me there, and about the same time, I was skilled and still am, at stripping hares and rabbits, and gutting them, and even deer, I can ... *[CAN'T CATCH - 114* - sounds like "garlic"] a deer. And, and pheasants and so on. Locally, you see, my friends, and we often get pheasants, because they know I'm prepared to pluck the damned things! But I dissected a rabbit. I, I got hold of a sharp knife and so on, and I got hold of a book, probably from the local library, and there, you know, I traced the stomach, the duodenum and the rest of it, and I thought, "This is interesting", and I think that happened. And, talking of the local library, my father ran, he was President of that. We had one of the wealthy linen and woollen manufacturers in the village, before the slump, and it all, all I've been talking about earlier stopped, left money for what became the Woodman and Anderson Institute, with a, a librarian in post, in a house there. And the most wonderful library, not just fiction, but, you know, books like Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which I've, you know, I've read some of these things right through, as a young boy. One forgets until one is reminded, talking about them, and so it was, it was the most super place. And that librarian, who was a very crippled man, his son, Kenny, no, I beg your pardon, a nephew, Kenny Frazer, became professor, a Professor of Virology in Queens University, Belfast He's now retired, lucky blighter up in Tomantowel (??ph/sp) whisky country. But there are a lot of chaps like that brought up in the village. And the librarian told me, this Mr. Frazer, how often he'd get farm servants coming in, reading psychology and all sorts of books, and he'd be able to get them.

Do you think that's a peculiarly Scottish thing?

Well, the money was there for the supply of books, for a start. A place like Fraserburgh had a library, one of the Canadia Libraries, all over Scotland, where, you know, they were free. And, as a younger boy, I've just remembered now, I used to regularly, I read through, God knows who wrote them, but all the Teddy Lester in the Fifth, and Teddy Lester in the Remove. It probably means nothing to you, but I got a complete picture of English public school life, you know, from reading all these books.

So the influence of Dr. Slessor, the dissection of the rabbit.

The rabbit. And *Sorrell and Son*, but I, I can't, there must have been something there.

What's that about?

I have no idea, I've forgotten. Forgotten completely! (LAUGHS) As I say, I must re-read it and find out.

So Dr. Slessor was, let's say, a bit of a character around the village?

Very much so, yes. Yes. He was. He also, I remember I was in the choir of the main church in Fraserburgh. I remember once the minister had fallen ill suddenly, and Dr. Slessor just got out, he was an elder, he went up and gave a sermon. I can't remember what it was about. He may have been talking public health or something, but he was a very very well-educated man. Very well-read.

Was he a very different man from your father?

Yes. Yes, because my father was a more rigid personality. I think probably because of his rheumatism and everything else. I mean, he, my brother and I dug the garden, cut the ivy, and did all the sort of hard jobs about the place. It was surprising, of course, that when we went to some loch, that took miles of walking over very tough ground and everything else, he was quite average common flesh! But that, that's human nature, isn't it. And Dr. Slessor, of course, his eldest son did medicine, and took over his father's practice. His younger son that I climbed with, became Assistant Master at the Rotunda, that's the midwifery place in Dublin, and then was called up in the Navy, and was on destroyers, because he objected to, because of his gynaecological skills, being landed looking after WRNS for the whole of the War, that disgusted him, and he went off and got on to destroyers, and he was kept on destroyers with a certain captain, because they liked to play chess together! So one's careers, and then Stuart, because of his gynaecology, was delayed going into the Navy by a year or so, most of us went in '39/early '40, and a Commander Bingham was setting off an expedition to the Antarctica, and Stuart volunteered for that, and he went off to Newfoundland or Labrador, or somewhere, and took a team of huskies south to Antarctica, and became part of the exhibition (means expedition?? - 187). We've got a book about him somewhere in the house. And he used to come and stay here

with, with us, if he was ever in this area. And he was just the sort of chap, he, he was a very tough fellow, but he became Chief Medical Officer, Falkland Island Dependencies, after the, his spell in Antarctica, and was out there for quite a long time - South Georgia and the Falklands. And he died, not so terribly long ago, up in Braemar, and quite certainly, he'd been up hill-walking, which he and I used to do together, and climbing as well.

Can you say what age you would have been when you made a firm decision that you wanted to do medicine?

Seventeen. Because, I can say that quite definitely, because I was late, you know, the, I think I started university when I was just 18, probably, no, probably just 17. In '34, anyway. Your brain will be quicker than mine! I was born in 1916.

And you started university 1934, so you'd have been 18.

That's right. Just 18, just 18. Well, it would have just been the year before, seventeen and a half, I would have ... I was very late in really deciding.

And where did you study medicine?

Aberdeen.

What made you choose to go there?

The locality, you know, it was the nearest Medical School, and that was it. I was relatively near home, what, 40 miles away.

So you arrived there with not too much science background?

Oh no, no, not at all. I had to work very hard at medical chemistry, which, fortunately, was mostly about soaps and, and things that, you know, were away from ... it was astonishing when I went there and discovered how little I knew, because the chaps who had been at the Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen, or the Aberdeen Grammar School, you know, they, they knew it all.

How did you manage to get accepted to study medicine?

Well, I'd passed in maths and whatever.

That was enough?

It was, yes, you had to have maths, at least Lower Maths, and I had Higher Maths. It must have been ... And I mean, I mean, I knew a bit, but I'd really concentrated on the Classics, so to speak.

What was life like as a medical student in those days?

It was great fun. We were as poor as hell. I got into lodgings where this crofter's son, Harry Alderston who became an advocate in Aberdeen, and I shared digs with a Miss McLeod. I forgot what we paid a week, but it was round about the 22 shillings a week, or something else. And we shared, my mother insisted that I have a piano, because I'd, at this time, I'd taken Higher Schools in, in Pianoforte, the Royal Academy of Music or whatever, I've forgotten which now, and she insisted that there was a bath and a piano. The thing was that there were very much better lodgings where other medical students had been in, a Miss Wisharts, and her, her digs were famous, and other, the doctors, Dr. Slessor's sons, for instance, and bankers' sons and people who were family friends, had all been with Miss Wishart, and I was going to be promised a place at Miss Wishart's, and I eventually got it after a year. But I think the family were quite pleased, because to Miss McLeods came a young, aspiring opera singer, a girl, I suppose I can give names now, God knows ... I don't know whether ... she's probably married and had a nice big family, I should think. But she was an Isobel Gordon, she had a beautiful voice. And, of course, I could play the piano for her. And, of course, these sessions got longer and longer, and, and the studying got less and less, so I think they were quite glad when I was moved to Miss Wishart's! I'd have loved to have met up with her. She was a very lovely girl, and had a beautiful voice.

What other sort of social activities did you ...

Well, again, because of knowing that my father had two sisters and a brother to educate, and no money at all, to speak of, I didn't join the golf, or any of the other things. With my being on the hills a lot, and long long walks on my own, I was a lot on my own, as a boy, as you can imagine, because I wasn't so much with the village boys, except for football or whatever, and I was interested, at this time, I suppose one always goes through a phase of the Celtic fringe type of thing, as a student, better than Communism, anyway, I suppose. And I was starting to learn Gaelic, and I joined the shinty team which is a hellishly rough game. But I got in the first shinty team, and that, again, was a very small something, very very poverty-stricken

Highlanders mostly, and I became a harrier, and then, with the Officers Training Corps, of course, I ran and hurdled for them. And then the gymnasium was very close to where we did our anatomy dissections, and I, they were fencing there, and we had a Captain Brocks, before the War, who was, I think his title was Physical, Director of Physical Education, I think. And a Miss Campbell who taught the girls, and she was a very good foil fencer. But I did epee and sabre with Brocks, to the extent that one got to the stage of going into university fencing, or we went down to Montrose Flying School, for instance, the RAF, and fenced there, that sort of thing. So these were the main things I did. Running I eventually gave up, because I was involved with the other teams. But that was shinty and fencing - one indoor and one outdoor - it was quite a convenient thing.

What were your lecturers like?

Looking back, they were quite astonishing. I was just talking about one of them to a lady who deals in digging up pots from burials in, mostly in East Anglia, a Lady Briscoe, who was an ex-patient of mine, and a, a very great friend, is an authority on seals on pots, and, you know, I was laying off about short cysts (?? ph - 299), and Shetland, and beaker burials and things, because I was just brought up ... I was doing anatomy, but Professor Alexander Lowe was *the* great authority, and a most wonderful man. We learnt pre-history and everything under, under the anatomy people. And he had a man, Harper, who became, called Pro-Sector (?? ph - 303) of Anatomy, who became, he came down to one of the London Teaching Schools, probably as Professor of Anatomy, and he had a great idea which suited me, that, if you couldn't describe the course of a nerve, or whatever, it was all right if you could draw it, which, of course, if you were going to do surgery, made sense. And, of course, I had this photographic memory, and I got very high marks, I got a medal and all that sort of thing, in practical anatomy, purely because of this ability to see the thing.

So, being able to visualise something was quite ...

Excellent, excellent teaching. And, for some reason, I did very well in embryology as well. And, no, our teaching was very good, except for one, I think he was a very famous physiologist, who wrote Starlings, or had to do with editing, he wasn't Starling, I've forgotten his name now. He had three doctorates, this fellow, but he'd just come and say, "You'll find it all in pages of Starling". And we had a biochemistry teacher who was a complete madman. He'd, he'd bring in, in test tubes, one of urine, one of milk and one of blood, and then on the blackboard, he'd write, "Who killed the dairymaid?" you know. He was just a weird fellow. A brilliant researcher, I'm told. We then went on to our pre-clinical training. We had, he became a knight, Campbell, I've forgotten his first name, Dean of the Medical School, and that was in *materia medica*, first-class teacher. Our Professor of Medicine was a Sir Stanley Davidson who went to Edinburgh, and there was a Sir Gregg Anderson who was physician to the Queen in Scotland, at Balmoral. A very very fine teacher. And then Professor Lairmonth (?? sp./ph - 340), who had operated on King George Vth for all his arterial troubles and everything else, and also knighted, and also went to Edinburgh. Very very good medical teaching. And there were others as well, the bacteriology man, Cruikshank. First class. We did extraordinarily well. And my year did extraordinarily well, you know, latterly.

Did you have much contact with the lecturers on a personal basis?

I had with Professor Lowe, because my mother died and I wasn't conscious at the time, but that dear old man, unmarried, very definitely must have been keeping an eye on me in that respect. Not a lot until later, you see, one of the younger surgeons was an officer in the OTC. You met them in other affairs, very often. And because I'd never ever taught publicly in my life, I'd read maybe a lesson in church, or something like that, and I was used to performing in the Village Hall at piano competitions and stuff, and done a bit of acting, I'd never spoken. So I thought up a lecture to give to the Anatomical and Anthropological Society to just talk myself, in other words. I, I remember, I was cunning the first one, I did it mostly in the dark with lantern slides, and gradually one worked up that way. And then one of the great things, and I think this may have to do with my mother's death, but I was invited to a family of a Dr. Sempel, in Aberdeen, whose son was in my class, and the son had probably told them, and I was taken there on Sundays, nearly every, Sundays always, for a meal. And Robert was a rather stiff sort of young man, brought up very strictly, and I got him in to the OTC, and then I got him to come climbing and the rest of it, and the two of us went on right through university, and he died as, not so long ago, as Consultant Clinician up in Dundee, and I'm still very much in touch with his widow. And that family were very kind to me.

Category No. 11

Can you tell me what you remember most about the training you received?

In what respect? I think ...

Is there anything, in particular, which sticks in your mind about it?

It's very difficult to pick things out. I mean, I think the, the, the bits of the training in medicine was the lack of good physiological, to my mind, anyway, a lack of good physiology teaching, because this professor was too involved in collecting doctorates and things, and so was his biochemistry side. But otherwise, all I can think of is that the teachers we had were a pretty straightforward good lot, that we were a fairly disciplined lot in that we'd, in that day and age, I think, we had very little diversions, and there was only one chap in the whole year of nearly a hundred students, who had a car. Most of us got about on our feet. They had tramcars in Aberdeen, where they fitted in, or, or on a bike, you see. And to go, for me to go to the cinema was quite a treat. You felt a bit guilty sneaking off, because of, you know, one hadn't got much to spend, but certainly in Aberdeen, in those days, I, I, I think, looking back, my gosh, it was wonderful, you know, how we filled in the time. And we had such a very very friendly year. We're, we've all been in contact. None of us were killed during the War, which was exceptional. But we have losses one way or another. But we, we have met, up till about three years ago, we were meeting every, every three years up in Aberdeen, or thereabouts, and still keep in touch. So I think there was that aspect to it. There was a certain discipline, I think, once one got to doing ward rounds, which we did at the end of our second year, if I remember rightly. Not now, as some of them start to do, you know, going ... attached to a hospital quite early on, in one way or another. We'd none of that. It was all quite a fixed thing. And then, you mentioned earlier about getting to know the staff. As one became final year, and particularly if one had a job locally, in, in the hospital itself, as I did, for only a few months until War broke out, there was a, a very friendly, very nice contact there with people who previously had been staff. I mean, after all, one was assisting at operations and, and the rest of it then, and discovered that chaps who were doing a surgical clinic or something, and were quite formal, had finished, then when you were assisting them, they were telling stories and, you know, they were, they were colleagues, and it opened out, for me, anyway.

Talking about you, thinking about you saying that they told stories and whatever ...

Yes.

Did that sort of thing go on normally during the curriculum, that you felt you were being admitted to this medical world?

I think so. I think there was a feeling of that. But some of the staff, for instance, in medicine, they were, they were quite people apart, you know, they were gods, demigods, I should say. There was a good element of that in it. And it may be that the Aberdeen boys who had connections, and even family connections, were on a different wicket from me, who was an isolated village boy from the outback, so to speak, it could have been quite different.

Did your father have to pay for your training?

He, there must, he must have, yes. In my second year, and I had worked very very hard because of my lack of early, what you might call medical chemistry and physics and stuff ...*[End of Tape 2 - Side A]* I discovered that if I handed in, I discovered that, in the University Calendar, that there were a whole lot of small Scholarships on the go. One for a chap by the name of Watserwatti (?? ph/sp), provided he kept the tombstone of the same James Watt, or whatever, in some outlandish seaport, clear of lichen and moss. And I discovered the Knox Mortification Fund. Now that got me £16 a year, and my father was most dreadful (grateful??) for that. And I don't know if that answers your question.

What did that involve?

Which?

The Knox Mortification.

Just handing in, if you'd medals or First Class Certificates, and I'd enough to, I think, no-one else probably applied for it. You know, it was just something you found in the list of these things that people could get. Anyway, the thing is this. Yes, I think so, and I think that my parents probably had to restrict a lot of their own activities and things on behalf of myself and my sister, you see, two years younger, but doing Arts at the same time as me, in the latter years.

So, do you think it was a struggle for them to put you through?

I think so. I'm sure it was, yes.

You've no idea how much it would have cost them to ...

I, I, I have no idea at all.

... put you through university?

No. No idea at all. I certainly hadn't any Scholarship at all, and there must have just been University fees had to be paid.

Were you aware that it was a struggle for your family?

Oh, indeed, yes. I was glad, as I say, for the half-crown or the florin in my socks from time to time, because that was all the pocket money one had, as a, as a university student.

Now, you said your mother died while you were in the first year at university.

Yes. It must have been second year.

Second year.

The beginning of the second year, yes.

What effect did that have on you?

Ah, I, looking back on it now, I must have been in a, in a form of shock for quite some time, I think, and just buried myself in, in work, which is probably why I did so well that next year. And in fact, of course, as I've hinted, I'm sure that doctor in Aberdeen, whose son was in my class, Dr. Sempel, I'm sure that was the reason that this family, and, I, I think there were some of the other teachers, the orthopaedic surgeon, somehow, I was, I was being, if you like, waltzed, and probably not interfered with because they found that, you know, I was carrying on.

Did it have an effect on your work?

It was a frightful blow. It made me, I, I just buried myself in work, there's no doubt about that. No doubt at all. And then felt, to some extent, I had to support my father, because I knew he was unhappy, to say the least, about my aunt's housekeeping and the rest of it. There was all this upset that happens in a family at that time.

Did it take you a long time to get over it?

I suppose it did. I don't think I'm over it yet, in a way, you know.

How old was she when she died?

45. About. Yes, 46 perhaps. Again, I could give you exact dates, I've only got to look up my records. And my grandparents, of course, my grandfather Gavin had retired to Aberdeen, or at least outside Aberdeen, the other side of the River Dee from the city, and I could visit them. I used to walk over there, the few miles and back. And that was a great comfort, having some family nearby, of course.

When was it that you decided that you wanted to become a general practitioner?

Ah, that's a good question! That's, that's tricky. I, I was in the Army, I went, I was called up virtually when War was declared, but kept on at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, because I'd infantry and medical certificates in the OTC, I'd even been down training in 1936 in Aldershot Command, so people were, could go, in those days, as medical students, and train. Not that I had any connection as they do now with cadetships and payment or anything, this was a voluntary business, through the universities. So I, I, I qualified, and I was called, and I was posted to Edinburgh Castle, I think it was about the 9th November, 1939, or sometime in November, anyway. And I was stationed in Edinburgh and went on through that. Eventually, I, you won't want details of my, my Army business, that'll be another, a long thing. But I was extremely lucky one way or another, but became, after the year, a little earlier than that, actually, a Captain, and then I went out, I volunteered to go to India because of my father's connection, and because of the Major I was with, who'd just come back from fighting in the North-West Frontier, Azmirastan (?? ph/sp), he wanted to get back to India, and we both volunteered. Typical Army business - we were sent to Egypt.

But while you were a medical student, then, you didn't have any idea that you wanted to become a GP?

No. I'd thought of becoming a surgeon, and doing, perhaps surgery and midwifery. And there, I think, my anatomical training, too, would have been a help to me. But I was called up, and well, let's ... by 1941, in Egypt, I was actually doing surgery. I was in one of the General Hospitals in the Canal Zone.

Can I stop you there. Okay, what year was it that you finally did your training at Aberdeen?

When did I finish?

Yes.

In July, 1939.

Finished July, 1939.

And called up, and joined the Army in November of 1939. You see, there was only that short period.

Can I just ask, while you were at Aberdeen, what was the attitude of the lecturers and other students towards GPs? Was it seen as a ...

It was a, it was, I think I can answer this. It was a, a teaching medical school, and an awful lot of the GPs had come from it. There was always, and still is, I should think, a whole batch of people. So there was very close contact, very friendly contact with people. Difficult in a way, we knew War was coming, and the rest of it, and I knew I wasn't going to be there very long if war broke out, and it did break out, of course, in September of that year.

But was ...

And my chief knew he was going to lose me, and at least two of his junior surgeons. I mean, he'd trained fellows with the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, because they were also OTC, or had Army, Territorial connections.

But was general practice seen in any way inferior to specialities?

No, I think not. Not in Aberdeen, no, I don't think so. In a way, a lot of the chaps were characters, you know? And had their own little fame ... (LAUGHS) in their own right.

So you finished at Aberdeen in July, 1939.

Yes. Yes. Went into the Army.

Then what did you do? Straight into the Army?

Yes. Yes. And then went through all sorts of things, and eventually, I'll cut this short, because it's very complicated. I was out in Egypt and then became a, a trainee, as it were, malariologist, and by the time the War ended, commanded that unit, I became a Major out in West Africa, because I was over there on special jobs, and eventually commanded that unit, and became Senior Malariologist, Land Forces, Greece, and as a Lieutenant Colonel, and was awarded the rank for life. So that was the Army. The point was, I had this Army rank, and the Army, I was asked, my General came over from Italy and tined (?? ph) me out, and everything else, and I was asked would I be prepared to stay on in the Army. I also knew that if I came back to London, my Brigadier, who'd been in Italy, a Dr. George MacDonald, Professor MacDonald as he became at the London School of Hygiene, the Ross Institute, could get me a job there, whereby I would have taken a D.Ph. or whatever. There was also talk of me going to the States, to study under somebody there. Again, that would have been in the Tropical Medicine side of things. Now, I decided to come back, not to stay in the Army, my rank would have dropped back, though I would have had the honorary one for life, and so on. But, my brother having been killed, I was the only male left, so to speak, in what had been an extensive family, to carry on. I really felt a duty to my father to sort of come home and start a family. And I had been, I had come back in the middle of the War, to the Army School of Hygiene, and married my wife, whom I'd met up in Aberdeen when I was a house surgeon, because she was at the Royal Free School of Medicine for Women, in London, and they were evacuated to, to Aberdeen, for a spell. And I met her up there, I thought she was Scandinavian, because, you know, we're as near Oslo, or Bergen, shall we say, as we are London, up there. And I, the first words I ever said to her were in Norwegian, and she answered me in Swedish, which confused us both! We couldn't carry on. But she'd been over there on an exchange for three months. And there it was! Anyway, we became friendly, we started writing. My father, as I said, started writing to her, so when I quite unexpectedly came back to London, and what I was going to, I was going to be indoctrinated in the Yugoslavian set-up, and I was going to be dropped into, not Tito's lot, but the Mikhaelevitch (??sp) lot, that eventually Mikhaelevitch (??sp) was known to be collaborating with the Italians and the Germans, so he was written off. And Fitzroy McLean's lot carried on with, with the Tito partisans. So I, I was brought back, and I was studying at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, doing the entomology and the malariology of the Balkans, which I was going back to. And she was in, she had qualified and was in general practice. We got engaged and married. And I think the Army were kind to me in a way, I got a little longer than I might have had otherwise, because I'd been standing by to go off to Prestwick to fly out, for quite some time. But eventually, was posted out to Italy, where I was going to make contact with Yugoslavia from there. And I needn't go on with the story, except to say that my wife then, as I told you earlier, went to do general practice in Northampton, and I felt that whatever I did, even if I did go in to become a consultant, that a year in general practice wouldn't be a bad thing. But before that, and not having handled a stethoscope at all,

you know, I was very much in field units and in the field most of the War, apart from general hospitals in the Canal Zone earlier on. I felt I had to re-learn my medicine. And I went to Govan (Gordon? Golden?) Square and met Chat (??) Bonham-Carter, and persuaded him to take me on at the ... Post-Graduate Medical School. So I became a Junior Registrar there, at £350 a year, while my wife was in practice in Northampton.

What year would this have been?

'46. 1946.

So, becoming a GP was really a ...

No. What happened was, that I was going to do a year in GP anyway. Even, and by this time, although I may say I had had to do a special report for the Army on the work in Greece, which I was responsible for, as, as the Senior Malariologist, Land Forces, Greece, General Scobie's Land Forces, because the Greek Civil War had been on, you know, and there were lots of interesting difficulties. And having produced that for my, my, General Hartgill (?? name) in Italy, through my own Brigadier in Greece, I then was able to convert this into reasonable English, and submit this as an M.D. for Aberdeen. But they always want, I think, in most cases, if you haven't been attached to hospital research and stuff, a clinical examination, and I knew I couldn't hope in hell of passing that, until I'd done some medicine. So I went to the Post-Graduate Medical School, where, you know, the change in medicine, I mean, if they, if they couldn't find an orifice in, at Hammersmith, they, they, the heart people there, the Shaler Shellocks (?? ph), they made one, you know, they were putting needles into the liver for liver biopsies, and they were doing cardiocatheterisation (?? ph), and famous chaps there, and there was I just, you know, starting as a junior again. But it was tremendous work. And I went up and took my clinical examination in 1947, and, to my great astonishment, I passed it! They, they accepted me, anyway!

So that was your M.D.?

So I got my doctorate that way. And, at the same time, doing practice in Northampton, I enjoyed this, and, having divorced myself from the Army, if you like, regimentation, and, you know, you are nursed along, you know, in the Army, there's a close-knit thing. And having quite definitely taken a dislike to hospital life, mainly on the feeding side and everything else, you know, the rationing and the rest of it, and so on, I, I didn't take terribly kind to it, and realised that general practice was a way of settling down, starting a family, and, you know ... and it was challenging. And my wife's uncle was a ... he couldn't go to war, and was running an extremely busy practice in Northampton, and I learned a tremendous amount from him. And this, this was, you know, I thought it was great. And I made up my mind then, and by gosh, you know, it's a decision I've never ever regretted, despite the difficulties in the early days.

Taking your M.D., was that part of a, a plan that you had as regards your career?

Not at all, no. You know, if I'd gone on to try for a Membership, and I didn't think I would have been good enough to take a Membership, Royal College of Physicians, I ... well, going into general practice avoided that challenge. But we weren't well enough off, and really couldn't afford for me to stay on any longer doing hospital work, at that level, do you see what I mean? And I, as I say, I, I, I enjoyed the challenging midwifery and all the other things in practice, and we were settling down, and started our family. And then, after a year with my wife's uncle, we decided it wasn't going to be a family thing anyway, and I did a locum over in Englefield Green, not very far from here, near Windsor Great Park. Oh no! In '47, in the summer of '47, when Eton and these areas were flooded, that was the last big flood of the Thames, that was when I came over to see about taking this job with Eton College. And one of the masters was very kind, took me round, showed me where we would live, told us what the life was like, and he still is a friend. And, and some other master has now retired, I mean, there's one coming here on Sunday, we ... there are very close connections. I didn't take the, the school doctoring on. I landed up in a practice, in Slough, where we looked after a lot of staff of the College, but not the, not the boys.

Can you tell me where you saw the practice in Slough advertised?

Yes. *BMJ*. One was going through the *BMJ* all over the place. There was one in Fraserburgh I thought of, and wrote about. There was another doctor in Rochdale. And then there was this one, pleasant Thames Valley. *[INTERFERENCE ON TAPE - 239-24l]* ... came from High Wycombe, and that was quite near her home town, home, and her, her elderly grandparents, and it suited us very well.

What did your parents, or your father think of your move into general practice?

I don't think he ever commented on it. He was just pleased to see that one of his ... *[INTERFERENCE ON TAPE - 248]* ...that, you know, things were going on, and our children were growing up and so on.

Did you have to buy the practice?

... *[INTERFERENCE ON TAPE - 252-4]*... and I'm not very good at remembering the details now. But the practice I joined was with a Dr. Dunne, a Dubliner, who hadn't been to war at all. He had, he had trouble anyway, but had come as an assistant to a Dr. Britten, who was a doctor to Aspro and some of the other firms here, and ran a very good general practice. And this Dr. Dunne, being a Catholic, wanted a doctor in his practice, who wasn't a Catholic. I think this was for Cremation Certificates or, or some other things like that, that he, from the faith point of view, felt that he couldn't sign, you see.

He couldn't issue Cremation Certificates?

It was something like that. In, in time, Pat, who's still alive, retired in the area, he, he still, I think he softened over the years. But the thing was that it was a very busy practice, and we got on very well from that point of view. The only thing was, well, that he was, he was a devout, I think pretty devout Catholic, but his main religion was golf! And he was a very very fine golfer, so that, you know, President of Stoke Poges, or Captain or whatever these golfers are, with the result that with so many of these things on, you know, the rota was a little disturbed at times. But, and I couldn't always go with some of my ex-Army or other friends, to Twickenham, to see the rugby match, and that sort of thing. But we got on very well. But that practice broke up in 1966, completely. We decided we weren't going to go on together, because he discovered the land in which the house was, was extremely valuable, and he was going to come into a vast sum of money, there's no doubt about that. But the practice, as a tenancy, was the difficulty. It didn't allow him the freedom he wanted to develop it when he wanted to. And we split up. But it was quite easy in a way, because there was no business of misdemeanours, whereby, I think, on the Practice Agreement, I would have had to go 12 miles out, or he would have had to go 12 miles out, or whatever. And the other thing was that a very old friend, who had an, and he had an Irish partner, was thinking of retiring, and felt that financially he couldn't, I don't know why, but anyway, I just went to a patient of mine, the local banker, and he, in his lunch-hour, went and looked at this house, and came back and gave me an overdraft, and I just purchased the thing outright.

And this would have been ...

This would have been '66. So within, Pat Dunne and I, we just informed our patients that I was to be at another address. And I was a little concerned, I could have lost thousands. And, and so was he. What he did really, was take on, eventually, an assistant, and so they would refer to us, his partners, the lady and the chap, they never, I know they never were, and he eventually got his nearly £200,000, which is a lot of money, when he eventually retired. In fact, there was quite a delay until he sold the property, which was a great advantage to him. I purchased a property which I, it was mine for life, so to speak. I had then my complete, you know, I had nothing over my head about what would happen if the partnership broke up or anything else. So ... and I took over the Irish partner, a dear man, who became a member of our family, virtually, and the man I bought the house, bought the house from, retired, but came back as my part-time assistant, for about two years, until he finally retired. So it worked out very very well. As a standby, I had offers to go in as Industrial Medical Officers to one or two firms in the Slough Trading Estate.

When you first joined the practice, were you taken on as an assistant, or as a partner?

Oh, I think so, for a very short time. Assistant with a view, was the thing, within, I think it was only about six months, I think. And we were very soon a parity, certainly.

I see. So when you became a partner ...

I was, I was a year or so older, anyway.

So you had parity as soon as you became a partner?

Oh yes.

What sort of income were you earning at that time?

This is very difficult to answer now, you know, looking back. Very difficult. I think if I went up into the loft, no, I think I did eventually get rid of them. I could've answered that, maybe, two years ago, because I had all the accountants things, you know. But it seemed a vast sum of

money when you consider that I was only having £350, was it?, or something, at Hammersmith. But then I had ... one had quite a big overdraft. And one got very angry that one was only getting a very very small percentage. One and a half per cent, or something ridiculous, on the money that, you know, you did the practice, you bought the practice with.

How much did you have to pay for the practice?

I went in July '48. That I cannot remember. I honestly, it's just gone.

Okay. So you became a partner ...

In December, 1947.

In December, 1947. How many patients did you have on your list, at that time?

That again, I can't remember. But I think, between us, the figure of something like 6-7,000 comes into mind. We would have had about 3,000 each. And I do know that when I moved and took over the other practice, Harry Finlay's practice, I had a list of, at one time, 4,700, on my own. And after a few years, Dr. Bawden never wanted to have any financial thing in the practice. I said that if we became a group practice, it would pay me, him and the partnership. And he was getting a ridiculous amount a year, much too small. So I called him in to my room, we'd three consulting rooms in this house. My room was as big as this. I mean, it was a, really a very good house from that point of view. And he was absolutely white-faced. I think he thought, much older than me, he was going to get the sack. A most delightful man. I said, "Look, Robert, we've got to make arrangements for you to have another £500 a year, just for a start, and tax arrangements. And you'll become a partner, in name only, but we're now a group practice." And, and then we got a, an extra grant, you know, they were trying to keep us chaps going. And so I had these overdrafts at the bank for years, and, of course, part of that was tied up with buying the practice house. One was doing very well. This was a boom town, you know, Slough. I was offered a job on the staff of the Slough Industrial Health Service, and my practice was just so busy, I couldn't do it. But I mentioned my wife could be available, and she eventually went and worked there for years with Dr. Eger, ex-brigadier, Airborne Forces, who ran the Slough Industrial Health Service, which became a very well-known Service, indeed. I mean, books have been written about it and everything else. And I've had a connection with that, as, on the Joint Management, on the Advisory Committee, on the Medical Industrial Health Service side, until, well until I was over 70, which was ridiculous. I wasn't even representing the GPs by this time. But eventually I got out. So, and then there was a lot of insurance work. Every afternoon, if I hadn't a special clinic, I would have two or three insurance examinations, and one did really very well, financially.

When you first arrived, how many panel patients would you say you had, compared to private patients?

Oh, in the first practice, '47 to '66. There weren't many private patients, neither on my list, nor on my partner's. The proportion would have been less than five per cent, I suppose.

Would you have liked more?

No. Indeed, we encouraged, and I did, in my own practice, if I can call it that, when I took over the other one. We encouraged our people to become National Health. As we explained to them, you're not going to get any better treatment, and the cost of drugs, especially for the diabetics and so on, was such. And, you know, I had titled people in my practice, and everything else, and they're still great friends, and, you know, they felt they had to be private. One very very wealthy stockbroker, still alive, fortunately, he must be nearly 90 now, and he and his wife quite prepared to come and sit in, in the surgery, and sit there and take their time, until I ran an appointment system. There's no doubt about it, and we persuaded them ... and there were interesting things happened, because this, this, one of the young bankers with a family of four, and we used to go for all the simotic (?? sp.) diseases, the measles, the lot. And do you know, it, it, especially if they had ear trouble, the pre-penicillin days, in particular, these kids were an embarrassment to these people who, you know, hadn't, hadn't a lot of money, and the bills mounting up. And they know, they knew that both Pat Dunne and myself would cut the bills a bit, by agreement in the partnership. So he eventually, inherited some money, left the bank, went off to live in Shanklin, in the Isle of Wight, and before he opened his hotel, which was only a seasonal one, April till September or something, my wife and I were invited down as guests to ... you know, there were lots of nice things like that, that ... you know, appreciation from patients.

How long were you in practice before the NHS started?

Well, December '47 to July '48, how many months?

Seven or eight.

That's all. But eventually, I got fed up having all these bank overdrafts, and I wrote to my MP ... *[End of Tape 3 - Side A]* Well, now, remind me again. I was talking about the practice. Oh yes. He'd managed to get his money that he'd, you know, for the partnership, his partnership. So, I, I, I was told, I must write him a letter with tears in my eyes, which I did. And it went to Sir Anthony Mayer (?? sp.), who's caused a lot of trouble in Mrs. Thatcher's time, and she starred it, or something, as they say, and I got the money out of them. That was only a thousand or two, but it was very welcome. We had difficulty, I definitely used some of my own money. I did inherit a little from a grandparent, towards the partnership. And more so when I was senior partner, as it were, in the one I took over. And paid for extra staff, as you might say, a nurse/receptionist type of person, when a lot of the practices, I knew, hadn't got this. But I just felt I, one, one wanted to have this standard. And because of an extraordinarily good Medical Officer of Health in the area, I had a very close rapport with him. So I had, eventually, two district nurses, two midwives, we'd a psychiatric social worker, things like that, all linked in pretty early. And long before they started as a definite thing with the Royal College of General Practitioners, there was a man Barber, of, I think, Dunmow in Essex, started training medical students from Mary's, and I, I don't, I think I may have written to Barber once about it. But Mary's, I got Mary's medical students coming to my practice, and I was taking them round on a sort of a teaching basis. So sometimes the practice was so delightfully slack, it would be visiting the dungeons of Windsor Castle, or whatever! But that was the sort of thing. And there was always something going on.

You said that Slough was a lucrative place to practice.

Yes. Purely because of the extra work - insurance work and so on.

Were there many other doctors around?

I think, counting the fringes, I think there were nearly 30. Latterly, in the seventies, anyway, I would have thought, we got quite a lot of Asians came in, either India or Pakistan came in. I had a very large number of Indian, I had connections in the War with Fourth and Fifth Indian Divisions, and I'd only a smattering of Urdu, but, you know, these chaps latched on, and I, I had a lot of them came. Then, when they got their own people came into the Slough area, they, I know there was pressure put on, community pressure put on, to go to them, quite a lot came back. And I still get saluted if I go in to London, by guards who came impoverished from Merpur (?? sp.) or somewhere in Pakistan, and now have three or four children. This is true. Only a few months ago, four children all, well, three at university and another going. And that's how they got on in Slough.

Was there much competition when you first arrived?

Well, I never had any, when I started in December, '47?

Yes.

No. No. I mean, all our ... my Irish partner, I mean, he had a lot of friends, but he didn't have the same connections as I did. I was offered command of a medical unit of some sort, perhaps Field Ambulance, down in the Hounslow area, by an ex-, a Colonel Summers who had commanded it. And, knowing my rank and everything, he, he offered this to me. But by this time, I'd, one of my, you might call my chief competitors from the area in the practice, had asked me to join and help him with St. John Ambulance Association, which I did. And went up and took over, eventually, from him. But I, I never became an area, I became a Corps Surgeon, never an Area Surgeon, because of ... no, sorry. I did become an Area Surgeon for years. Never became a County Surgeon because of the, the practice. I had two things before any of the others, and that was my family and the practice. And, you know, I did an awful lot of weekends away for St. John, examining and the rest of it. And I examined for the Railway, and, because my father had the same name, and they knew about it at Paddington, my father got free rail tickets all the way from the North of Scotland to Paddington, or to Slough, rather, in my name, so to speak. But that was my gift for doing all their examinations. I also had, had other ties as well. You see, I was, as I say, on this, I did a lot of the local committee work and everything else. I always thought that the way I lived, I'd have a coronary in my fifties. And so I did all that committee work. I became Secretary, for five years, of the Windsor Medical Society, eventually became President the same year my wife was Vice-President. That sort of thing. Got shot of it all. Led a very busy life, but got rid of it, the social responsibilities.

Was there much competition for patients, in the area?

No. No. No. There was a tremendous influx of people, because of all, 200 factories here, with light engineering of all sorts, and there was ... and a very interesting, in fact, it might be relative to know the sort of practices we had, because, apart from the oddities - one oddity was a, a Chinese girl from Hong Kong, who came over and had four babies under me, you know, she stayed at one of the local take-aways, I suppose, and had her baby and then took it back off to Hong Kong, and turned up, you know, about every two years for a time. The others were interesting. When we came, there were quite a lot of Irish here, there always had been. And then, if you went to a place like Eton College where, as I say, we looked after a lot of the staff, the maids and all the others, they were, at that time, Irish. They, the Murphys and the MacDonalds, patients of mine, they were replaced by Italians. And the Italians were tremendous workers. They had, they moonlighted. They worked for Mars bars, Mars Confectionery had shifts, and then the job, or the wife had a job at Eton, where they had a house, you see, that sort of thing. Then they were eventually replaced by Spaniards and Portuguese. And then finally, I think, they landed up with Filipinos, but by this time I'd, I wasn't looking after Eton any more.

Would you say you were happy, or not, with your income, when you first started in Slough?

Oh, one's never happy with one's income if you, if you've got youngsters, you'll, you'll know. But one was doing pretty well. One was doing pretty well. And I was getting very good advice from my banker patients. I'd a great, you know, they were very very good to me.

They gave you advice, did they?

Yes. Yes. That I didn't pay for, I may say! You know, I wasn't on the bank's business of taking ten per cent cut if I died, or anything like that! These were friends that I would meet at music concerts, or whatever, as well. Still do meet one of them at music at Eton. But no, if you were in a practice like this, you had such a wide range. I did. I mean, a manufacturing town, certainly. But absolutely on the fringe of Stoke Poges and places, so that I had a Sir This and That. And then the wealthy stockbrokers, one or two, one in particular an Endatchett (??). And I was a great saver, because my father never had any money to save, and I also had an uncle who had, was a banker in Aberdeen, who gave me good advice. And I always had an on-going savings thing. I got very good advice about buying this house, for instance, and how that was worked on the mortgage, and everything. And I owe a lot of that eventual, how shall we say? Feeling, you know, not, not well-off, but quite comfortable with the way one was living, to, to friends that I met, as much as anything, through general practice, my own practice.

I know you were only in practice for six months before the advent of the NHS.

Yes.

But did you get the impression that most people could have paid, could afford to pay for the doctor?

Well, I, no, I don't think so. You see, the practice in Northampton, that I did my year's Assistantship in to Jean's uncle, had it's own dispensary. He'd two dispensers. And he ran a Club. I mean, he had the same bottle of medicine, out of a great Winchester, and just a tap, which he sold for God knows how many shillings to his private patients, which the, the other people got on the Club, and they paid a shilling or whatever. My wife may remember how that was run. So there was a lot of that. And we were very conscious of the fact that very often, especially visiting people who had, and especially with children with chronic ailments, that, you know, while our bills were a complete embarrassment, and, in fact, I certainly, I always did, with the agreement of one's partner, of course, we were both the same way inclined, as I gave an example.

So, if someone couldn't afford to pay, then you wouldn't ...

Well, they paid accordingly.

Yes.

Sometimes not at all. Certainly an old gypsy lady who lived in a, a little hutment in odd waste ground here and there, I mean, she never paid. You got a lot of odd characters!

Did you ever have to chase up bad payers?

I don't, I don't ever remember doing this. No, I don't, I don't think so. And, and by and large, you see, the town from then on, not now, it's in a recession now, there was always work. There was very very little unemployment. [If you'd like to take it away, I have the book on the development of the Slough Industrial, not the Health Service. Unfortunately, it hardly mentions it. And they mention this very well-known Dr. Eger who has written a book about it, and I don't

know, I think I gave the copy away to someone. They've even mis-spelt his name. But it gives an idea of what Slough was like.] And then there was other work that had been developed from my first partner's partner, so to speak, had, we had quite a lot of, not just the ordinary life insurance examination work, we had quite a lot of other insurance work, where people had been injured in accidents and everything else, to the extent that I landed up, quite often, going to the Old Bailey, to the Divorce, Probate and Admiralty, I don't think that's the order of the wording, but to cases where I was probably third in the line, you know, there was a top consultant and a local consultant, and then me. But I also, unofficially, did quite a lot of police surgeon's work, in an area where one police surgeon died, I think. They couldn't get one. But my wife had been to school with the Superintendent of Police's daughter, so he called me out to at least four murder trials, I did with P. Simpson. So there was a tremendous amount of variety.

How did you get the insurance work?

Well, that one came from the first partnership. And then once one's name was on, one, you know, I, I think they followed up. But I know that my ex-partner also continued doing it, even in his retirement. Oh, very early on, I also was asked to do War Pensions Medical Boards, and that goes back to 1950-something. They said, because of my rank, somebody must have looked me up, I'd be an ideal chap, because they were getting quite some senior officers, you know, Naval Captains, or whatever, and I had to examine for War Pensions. So I, every Friday morning, for years, I did War Pensions examinations. And then eventually was doing Attendance Allowance, and Mobility Allowances. And then when I retired from general practice, and they realised this, I didn't ask for it, I got more and more work, and finally I was doing, latterly, Boards of my own, when I became an Adjudicating Medical Authority or something, and, and was doing, you know, things on my own, of that sort.

Were you able to get insurance work, etc., as soon as you entered practice here?

Absolutely. Through my partner having been here during the War, but even when I shifted, through connections on the Estate with people, and I do think, I was told, anyway, the fact I had an M.D., God! it could have been an M.D. in, well, as it was, it wasn't in, in, in purely clinical medicine, if you like! I mean, I'd passed an exam of sorts, a damned tricky one, as I say, a Professor McNee, some of the, you know, high boys, one from Glasgow and so on. Anyway, the thing was, I, no, the point of your question though ...

That you managed to get insurance work?

In fact, the M.D., I think, mattered a bit.

Were there many M.D.s around in Slough?

No. I was the only one, to my knowledge. No.

And did ...

And I think the fact that I was, I dedicated certain afternoons of the week, and because of my Army abroad life, I always now usually have a siesta, and did all the time I was in general practice, where I could, for ten, 20 minutes, no more, just after lunch. And I stuck my feet up on this fireplace. Can you see how it's hollowed out on this side, as opposed to that? You see, absolutely hollowed out with my heels, and that's just sleeping for ten or 20 minutes, and then fresh as a daisy on, from then on, to do my insurance exams. And then I started a very early afternoon surgery at 4 o'clock, until 6. And then my staff were absolutely out of the office by six o'clock. But, I mean, we partners very often stayed on doing work, or seeing people specially, or something.

Was it a great help in supplementing your income, the insurance work?

Oh yes, very much so. And, of course, I wondered if you were coming to the point when, I think it was about 400 GPs, or family doctors, I should say, were marching with their feet. But at one time, early on, I considered going off to the Prairies in Canada, and considered also the Snowy Mountain Scheme in Australia.

This was because of the income?

This was the income and the fact that, you know, plumbers and people, and fellas drilling holes in bits of metal up in the Slough Estates were earning as much as us by the time we'd paid our practice expenses.

When would this have been?

Late fifties, early sixties, I suppose. Mostly fifties. Aneurin Bevan was still alive. I mean, round about that time.

Had you noticed a, a decline in the value of your income, say, in between you starting in practice, and that, that period? Had the value of your income decreased, would you say?

One always kept doing better every year.

But were you falling behind relative to other sort of professions, then?

Oh yes, I think this is what we all felt. I think, talking to chaps who left this area and went off elsewhere and so on, yes, I think this is what we felt. And, of course, we were all bringing up, again, young families, and I didn't ... you know, have to send mine off to public schools or anything, this was always, because we had very good schooling locally for girls, which they have benefited from greatly. But I could have had far more expense in that respect. And then, of course, I, I was always, perhaps, over-insured in a way, but I'd covered myself from dropping dead early, so that the house and my wife had so many hundreds a year, and my girls had their schooling paid, because they were paying privately until it became a grammar school. And I always felt comfortable in that respect, that, you know, I'd covered things.

Just going back to something you said this morning, where you were talking about the, that the doctor would receive gifts, in Scotland, sometimes.

Yes. Yes.

Did that ever happen to you down here?

Oh yes, yes. I had to go to the reading of a Will, you know, and one heard about jewellery being left to grandsons and granddaughters, and then "dear Dr. .... it's a pity he couldn't have had more", but I was left £500, which was quite a sum of money in those times. And then one always had gifts. I never drank ... if it was my last call, and I was coming home, and wasn't on duty through the night, I'd have a sherry, or whatever, with somebody. But I never drank on duty. And, so there wasn't that. But you got an awful lot of whisky. Being a Scot, I got more, I mean, I, I still, I swear I probably still have whisky I got years ago. One did, you know the story, I don't know if this comes into it, about the, the level of your practice, and I went through the gamut that if you, you know, the Registrar General's Classification, Class 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on. The GPs one was that if you went to a house, the top grade, you were offered a brace of pheasants, or partridge, you accepted that. Next down, you were offered a choice probably of sherry, a good dry sherry - class 2. Class 3, it was sherry, or a good cup of tea. Until you came down, Class 4, no, I think it was Class 5, where you went into the house, and you knew that you weren't going to even sit down, or have anything to drink, because the carpet was tatty under your feet. And that was the level of, of gifts as well, at Christmas time. But you got all sorts of things. There's a, still an elephant out at the back, and there's a, you may be able to see it through there, there's a great big urn, that a dear cottage lady gave me, and I took back in the boot of my car, and insisted I have that, knew I was a keen gardener, and they were going to enlarge her garden for one of the road widening things, and things like this. And that, a lot. I would have been very embarrassed. But, oh yes, one did quite well in that respect.

Can we just talk now about the first practice here in Slough.

Yes.

How did you get on with your senior partner?

Very well. Very well. We worked in very well together. There were only just a little difficulties about holidays, and, you know, I'd, I'd suddenly get an invitation from a friend to go to Twickenham, and he'd organised a golf match or something!

How did you get round those sort of problems?

Well, I, I, I gave in, usually, you know. I, I, I wasn't soft about it. I mean, we did have arguments, even about patients sometimes, but never any, how shall I say? I mean, if we met now, be as friendly as anything. And when I was in my other practice, I had such a big consulting room, that some of the pharmaceutical companies would arrange for meetings of as many as ten chaps to come, and I had a kitchen in my, part of my suite, so to speak, where my staff ate if they didn't go. So the pharmaceutical people would bring these airline type lunches, and I'd meet my ex-partner, you know, he'd come along, very happily. It's just that he's away out in Sunningdale now, but we, but we, we hear about each other through mutual friends.

Did you socialise with each other?

No. The, they were linked in to their golfing lot. His wife, you see, was a very very good golfer as well. It was, it was astonishing, an absolute religion. And, you know, he was a very very good golfer. And our lives didn't sort of, were in a different social circle altogether.

What sort of social circle were you in?

Well, my wife was into the Larders (?? ph) very early on, and we founded here, with others, the Cancer Relief, which is now a Cancer MacMillan thing. And we, we were meeting different people. And his wife, quite distinctly, only socialised with either golfing women, none of whom were medical that I can remember, bar one, but a lot of other Catholic wives, they often surely met through their own community, so to speak, whereas Jean was off with other lady doctors, she could come to the Medical Society, you see, in which we're still, you know, we're still going regularly to. We've a do next week, I think.

Did you have a formal interview when you came down to see about the job here?

No. What happened was, that he discovered I was doing a, a locum in Englefield Green, for a doctor who'd gone off to Jamaica, where he'd family connections, it was just after the War, you see. And I was doing his practice which ran from about Egham all the way out to Bagshot, and included the Wentworth Estate, and I couldn't leave it, being on my own, and when I told this Dr. Dunne that, he came over to see me. And I liked the look of him, and he seemed to like the look of me, and in no time, we'd fixed up. As I say, the, the split up would never have occurred if it hadn't been for this business, the legal implications of the property he, he owned. He was able to buy it during the War, for, nothing, and he'd only got a four per cent mortgage, or something on it.

What arrangements did you have for sharing out the workload between you?

I would have said that was split. And, you know, we had a very definite rota. It became very much better when I got to know one of our competitors, if you like, in another part of Slough, who was a single man, a single practice, that is, on his own, and I said, "Look, Billy, I'll stand by to let you get off on a Saturday, or whatever", and he would do this for me occasionally. And then, my other partner, still had a very closed mind to this, he wasn't very keen on it. But when this Dr. Werner's practice expanded, as all the practices were, and he was a damned good doctor, he took on a partner, as an assistant with a view, who became a partner. And the two of them linked in with us. So there were two practices of two people. And we worked out a rota. This was mostly on my doing, because I'd started the private arrangement beforehand, whereby we had one night on call from, I think it was end of surgery, usually six o'clock in the evening, or something like that, right through till eight, half past eight in the morning. Then we telephoned any work we'd done immediately to the other practice, word of mouth. Handed over all the details. So you had one night on duty. And then, every fourth weekend. And then you had a Friday to do as well, but that Friday was never the one that included the weekend, unless by special arrangement. This was a tremendous relief, because this was in the days when the main work was maternity work, at home. We delivered at home a lot. And secondly, the psychiatric work, when you had to get the duly Authorised Officer out, and hold a Petty Sessions with a magistrate, in the middle of the night, somebody, you know, completely manic, and whatever, and, you know, that, that was very very tiresome in a place like Slough. It, it was, you know, we worked damned hard.

So this was an informal sort of arrangement between the two practices, was it?

Yes. Yes, yes. And the five per cent lunatic fringe of each practice got to know, I mean, they tried us all out, and then eventually, but we had a very close rapport. And the interesting thing was that when the practice split up in '66, the two doctors came over to my practice, and that worked out very well, because my elderly Dr. Bone, the other Irishman, he didn't want to take part in this anyway. So I had a, a junior partner, a Dr. Lister, who's, who gave my name, in fact, to somebody at Reading, which is why you're here now! And that's how we ran it. And we never ever wanted to get bigger than just the four of us doing that. We didn't want to expand, as some of the practices did here, to 12. And the main complaint, as I've known, seeing a tremendous amount of people doing Attendance Allowances, and Mobility Allowances and everything else, they never ever saw their own doctor. I don't want to sound pompous, but we worked hard to be family doctors, you know? And by gosh, it paid off. Billy's dead now, Billy Werner, who ran that other practice single-handed. And then he took on a Dr. Skelly, who's now retired to Spain, living out there.

Were there any other forms of co-operation between the two practices?

In what way? Only in looking after patients. And we'd meet occasionally, socially, you know. But co-operation, and oh, there were people in the area, another Irish practice, O'Connor and his nephew, who took the practice over, has just retired, and he'd ring up and I'd, I'd stand in for his practice, there was that sort of thing went on. But between the four of us, I think we'd

enough to do with just our, our duty. It, it, you see that post across the road there, that's where Dr. Skelly, one of the four of us, lived. He never practised from their either.

Did you ever meet formally with your partner to discuss practice matters?

Not in the first practice. We'd, we'd always find time, just the two of us, to, to have a chat about something. But when my practice grew, and I got all the extra staff attached and everything else, we had absolutely regular meetings with the nurses, receptionists if necessary, the psychiatric attached, and other workers. And the midwives came, in fact, they had a clinic in the partnership, you know, training midwives and stuff like that. Yes, we had a, absolutely, that was a routine regular thing.

I was interested that you make a clear division between the first practice, and the second one, which you call "my", "my practice."

Absolutely.

Did you always feel, with the first practice, that ...

Well, there was this business of the tenancy and the future hanging over one, and I could develop the other one in a much wider respect. I was more in with the, the community side of ... and we did some work in conjunction with the Medical Officer of Health. I also got attached to a place where they had these shelter workshops, and the disabled. And I visited there regularly, and a whole lot of them were my patients, so, you know, one was able to expand one's medical ... with one's partners, because eventually, the second partner, Dr. Lister, he took over most of the midwifery, and then finally I phased myself out altogether.

Were you happier in your own practice, then?

Oh, absolutely. I mean, I had so much more room, much better premises, and, as I say, room for expansion, you know, both physically and mentally. But I would like to say that, and then as ...*[End of Tape 3 - Side B]*

So did you ever employ any assistants in your first practice?

No. No. Never.

Why was that?

There was just no need. We managed to, to get on and cope with the work ourselves, with the midwifery and all the other work. And we had, I, I arranged, as I said, with another practice in our area, for off-duty relief from time to time.

When you eventually employed an assistant in the sixties, what sort of terms was he employed on?

Well, I took over this practice, the second one, in 1966, and he had been employed as an Assistant, and I don't know what the terms were. He didn't want to have any financial implications or involvement with the practice, and he just worked as an Assistant, on a set salary. But I pointed out to him that I wouldn't have him working with me - he was an old friend - both, both these men were old friends of mine. I think I mentioned one wanted to retire, and come back, oh well, he worked, I suppose he worked as an Assistant when he came back, but we would never refer to him as that, he'd been the Senior Principal in the practice. But I, there ... that's difficult. No, he, he just came back in, in his own practice, but continuing in it part-time, put it that way. But the man I'm talking about, he, I immediately made him a partner, which also made us qualify to be a group practice. And he got a fixed salary out of the partnership, which we kept increasing as, as things went along.

Just imagine for a moment, if you had have been interested in employing an Assistant at any stage while you were in Slough, what sort of things would you have looked for in a potential partner?

Oh, well, that's a difficult one to answer, in a way, I think. I did, of course, eventually have a partner, and the things I was looking on was a, a general all-rounder, one went and found out about their background, the medical school they came from, that sort of thing.

Was that important to find out?

Oh, I always thought so, yes. Yes. And, of course, their outside interests as well. Very difficult suddenly to be asked a shot, that one. I would have given it an awful lot of thought before I, I interviewed the chap, I think.

Would you have asked to meet his wife?

Oh, certainly, yes, yes. And, indeed, when I came to look for a partner to replace the old Principal, who eventually fully retired, then, of course, I did meet a wife, and, and made a good choice there. I mean, they're still great friends.

Would most GPs interested in employing a partner, would they ask to see their wives?

I think so. Certainly in the Slough area. I know of friends in other practices, that I've spoken to, when they, because one couple came up from the South Coast, and came to be interviewed by us, and also went to another partnership in the town, and they certainly wanted to see the wife, and it was the wife that decided us both to send this poor fellow back to the South Coast, in fact.

Why, why was it so important to meet the wife?

I don't know. I think it was from our own experience. After all, in general practice in those days, the wife took on an awful lot of the telephoning and everything else, and did a lot of unpaid work, maybe not in the practice building, but off-duty, through the night, and so on. My own wife answered the telephone all our practice lives. I was never ever first on the phone, or very exceptionally first on the phone. Jean answered it. Not because she was a doctor, but it was just that useful buffer.

So the doctor's wives are an important, were an important part of the practice?

Well, they matter tremendously to a partnership. I can give another example of the duty rota I was in, where one of the doctor's wives, a charming person, talked too much, and there were always, shall we say, confidential secrets in a practice that husbands and wives might discuss with each other, but they should never have leaked outside the house. But we know that in this case, this lass, a very lovely person, and very attractive ... (LAUGHS) tended to spread rumours, or, well, let out things that, necessarily, to such an extent that I think my wife and I truly were sometimes consulted by other doctors and people because they knew that anything that came to us was always strictly treated confidentially. Again, I hope this doesn't sound pi ... but, you know, this, this did happen. My wife, also, of course, was a magistrate for 33 years, and there again, there was a certain amount of confidential sort of things between us, that she came across.

Moving on to Slough South when you first arrived, what sort of place was it?

Well, the War had ended, of course, and there was a lot of light industry on the go, and a lot of strangers were coming in, like myself, and the town was expanding. And, in the area itself, Mars, Horlicks, and Aspro were, you know, businesses that were expanding very much, and were bringing in a lot of new people, as I think I mentioned, first the Irish, and they'd been here during the War, a lot of them. And then eventually the Italians were coming in, and later on, other, other lots came in, the Indians they, well, the Asians I should say, Indians and Pakistani. It was, it was expanding, and practices were very busy.

Was it a prosperous sort of place?

Very much so, yes, yes. Slough was until, until this very recent recession, Slough had always offered light industry. I mean, chaps would call themselves engineers, and all they were doing was boring a hole through a bit of metal with a, with a drill. But, nevertheless, there was a lot of that type of work went on.

Was there any poverty in the area?

Not, I would have said, I would have said no. There was the usual fringe of people. We had, in our practice, a gypsy woman, who insisted on, a Mrs. ... I think Kate, she was called, slept either in the doorway of Marks and Spencers or, or in a tent, in the summer, out in rough land that has now been built over. But not, no, I wouldn't have said there was a lot. So people were on the sort of fringe of poverty, I think, down in the village of Chalvey, in which we had a lot of patients, this was part of the old town, down in the lower part of the town. But there, there had been a very good fund started off, I think, I'm not sure, by the Mobbs family, and there was a lot of work done with this Fund, I've forgotten it's name now, the Fund and the town council, and there was a lot of that sort of help given.

Was there any unemployment around, of a ...

I would have said, in those days, speaking very generally, Slough had a minimum of unemployment, especially compared to places roundabout.

What sort of social group would you say most of your patients came from?

Most, well, from the ... 3 and 4, I suppose.

And what were the most common illnesses that you had to deal with?

Well, apart from the simotic diseases, you know, before a lot of these vaccinces came in, measles and things in the early days, and I always seemed to think we got an awful lot of ear, ear problems, childrens' ailments a lot. And then, of course, we mustn't forget when we had the very very bad flu epidemics, and a tremendous amount of respiratory disease before we got the

Clean Air Act, when we, you know, 4,000 deaths in London, but that was reflected in a place like Slough as well. I can't remember the years now. When was the Asian flu? About ... '58, or ... no, it was certainly before I left the first practice. It was either the late fifties or the early sixties. And, you know, it was respiratory disease, I would have thought was mainly ...

Was any, were any of those diseases connected to the social-economic conditions of the area?

No, I don't, I wouldn't have liked to implicate them too much. It was more, you know, just ... no, I wouldn't have thought so. The housing, of course, there were some old houses that have now been replaced, where the people always complained of the, the damp walls, and, and the rest of it. But then I didn't see an awful lot of that in our practice. We just had one area where there was a, a bit of that.

What were the houses like of the patients you had to deal with?

Well, if you'd said the main bulk, I mean, I had quite a lot of titled people in Stoke Poges, because the practice was quite close, but the, the main bulk of people were workers in Slough estates, and they were light, well, some artisans, quite a lot of railway workers in those days, I remember. And the rest were all, as I say, just the usual trades that one gets, shopkeepers the rest of it, and an awful lot of publicans. I seemed to always look after a lot of chaps running pubs. But, coming back to the housing, a lot of it had been built after the First World War when the Mobbs people and the others were, actually, they had a lot of Welsh and a lot of people from the North-East of England, the Geordies, came in here to build Slough up. All the work on the Slough Trading Estate, you see, was expanding, and houses, I believe, were built, they were shown how to build houses, and some were even knocked down so they could rebuild them again. And part of the town was served by electricity from the Slough Estates themselves. So it was all linked in, that development.

With all these different groups of people moving into the area, did you notice any differences in their health, between the groups?

No, I don't think so, not till we got Asians in, and then ... that was later on. No, the Welsh were a, a pretty happy sort of hard-working lot. A lot of them were ex-miners, or certainly came from the valleys, so to speak. The North-East people and so on, were also very hard-working, and they'd all got jobs. And in the housing estates that had been built up between the Wars, they all had television sets and cars before some of us doctors did, if you, if you know what I mean. They, they were flourishing.

How would you assess the overall standards of health in Slough, when you first arrived?

I would have thought not too bad. Again, these people had been put into houses that had been built not long after the First World War, and then a lot more estates were opened up in farmland, in the town, while I was in practice. I had a bit to do with consulting on the planning of that. In fact, some very good planning was done whereby houses were built virtually with an extra bedroom, that was going to allow for possible family expansion, which was, you know, pretty good forward thinking.

Did you feel that people would call you immediately they thought they were ill? Or did you get the impression that they would leave things for a while before getting in touch with you?

In, yes, I think this was very much, to some extent, a racial thing. When the Italians started coming in, they were on the phone rather more quickly than other races would have been. And then we found the same in, with some Asians. But again, it's very difficult to say this. We all, we all had our own Caucasian lot, you know, you always have this fringe of people who are a bit excitable, or a bit trigger happy, so to speak, about sending.

Could you put your finger on the moment when the average patient would, would call you? When would it be, would it be when they couldn't do their work, or they couldn't look after their children?

Oh, here again, no, it's very difficult to say. I mean, each family was it's own entity in that respect. You got some ... mothers that were very much worried by others. But, by and large, really, the way that people reacted, not only in my own practice, but in the one that we did a rota duty with, was a question of discipline. You could make people appreciate that, you know, they were perhaps overdoing it, and it didn't pay off. And by the time the two separate practices had worked this out with what I used to call the "lunatic fringe", it, it worked extremely well. We were all respected, and they all jolly well knew that they would get, you know, as good a service as we could give, and couldn't impose on us all that easily.

Were some patients a nuisance, did you find?

Oh, Lord, yes! There were patients that we had to tolerate for a year or so, and then, you know, ask them to be passed on. Oh yes. We had the most complete, awful people. You always knew, I mean, psychopaths who were absolute awful problems. And then schizophrenics and others who lapsed their treatment, and the rest of it. You always had these problems.

Was it particularly difficult dealing with the mentally ill?

Yes. Except that we were lucky here in that we had very good Duly Authorised Officers, as they used to be called in those days, who were the chaps who very often had to come out at night, and assemble a magistrate and us, and then get somebody taken in in one of the Sections into the mental hospital. We also had very good psychiatric help in those days. I mean, the psychiatrists were personal friends, still are, actually, you know, one meets them still at the Medical Society and so on.

Did you get lots of people with mental problems?

We'd quite a few. We had quite a few Polish people, I remember, and then quite a few Italian, again, rather than our own people, though we had one or two of those as well. Oh, and some really, you know, quite extraordinary bad cases, very difficult to manage. And that, in those days, was a, a great imposition on the practice. The night work with these psychiatric cases, and the night work with midwifery cases, really could be a tremendous imposition on the GP, and on the GPs family as well, you know, night disturbances and the rest of it. But one, one had, we didn't think anything of it, you know. It was just part of one's way of life.

Would you say that you enjoyed having to deal with patients with mental problems? Or did you not look forward to having see ...

No, I, I think one always, and I think this goes for my partners, there was a sense of challenge about it, that was, you got hellishly frustrated if, if you couldn't, you know, sort it out yourself, or even with help you couldn't get it, you know, satisfactorily arranged. There were often hitches getting people in and the rest of it. But no, I, I don't think there was any ... after all, I mean, a lot of us had been in the Army for about five or six years, and were used to very disturbed hours and the rest of it, and perhaps were better able to, to meet these challenges compared to others. Don't know.

Were there other types of patients, or types of illness, that you didn't enjoy dealing with?

I think, to be fair, I, I was doing less and less midwifery work, so I wasn't, as I got older, looking forward to cases that might be complicated, with forceps deliveries and things, purely because I wasn't getting enough of it to do. And then, of course, my, the partner I took on, was only too happy to do it. I mean, he enjoyed doing it. So one way or another, it all worked out very well, and we got tremendous help from the local hospitals in that respect. No, I can't think of anything, other than individual cases. A Pakistani boy, who was a bad asthmatic, so bad that you knew jolly well that, you know, he might be dead before you got to him, sometimes. This sort of thing. There weren't, there wasn't any category that I specially, you know, was too concerned about.

Just mentioning the Pakistani boy there, was there a big Asian community in Slough?

Oh Lord, yes! It, it must be, I think, my wife would be able to answer that more correctly, but over 25 per cent here, you see. Once the Italians had settled in to Mars and the rest of it, and, and gone on and the, the Poles became painters, decorators and all that sort of thing, I had quite a lot of them, and they'd come from displacement camps, you see, in the area. There were a lot of Asians came over, I think I mentioned before, chaps who had degrees in India and, and so on, who then were bus conductors or whatever, until they settled in the factory work, and the rest of it. And we've always had them. A lot of Sikhs. A tremendous number in Slough from Julunda (?? sp.), that's an area of the Indian Punjab.

Just going back to the majority of your patients, how did you deal with complaints that patients might make about the way they'd been treated?

Well, it varied. One that I took very seriously when a woman complained that our sterilisation of instruments was incorrect, or whatever. And she obviously was obsessional, and her complaint went right through to the Executive Council, or whatever it was called in those days. And my partner and I were very disturbed about this. This was in the first practice. Actually, the poor woman had developed, she had a frontal lobe tumour, and she died not long afterwards, and, you know, that, that was a thing that the Committee eventually, how to, what did they say? Some friend, or somebody, got it cancelled from their records, because it was, you know, it was all part of this thing. If I got any of the real trouble-makers that had come, and I

can remember one or two of them, I always gave them the address of the Executive Council and told them that's the place to get in touch with their complaint. And usually, that ended it!

They didn't take it any further, then?

No, no, not usually! (LAUGHS) I never ever, looking back, I'm quite certain I never ever had any problems. I know one of the partners in the other practice had, where a girl who had bad asthma died, but we also knew that there were, partly the fault was her parents. The treatment of the girl, and the parents sending and the rest of it, and that was a most unfortunate thing. But he went through the most harrowing, how shall I say? Questioning and everything else, before the thing, the Council, or whatever. We were all terribly upset about that, because we knew about this girl, we knew about her parents, and it was just damned bad luck.

How did the death of a patient affect you?

Oh, very much sometimes. Terribly ... a little girl who had spina bifida, most beautiful child, and she was about 13 or 14, I suppose, when she died, with, and, as often happens, chronic kidney disease. You know, you got to, you knew that kid from, for years and years, you know, it was quite upsetting sometimes.

Were you ever given any training about how to cope with, with that, at medical school?

No. Other than training one learnt. I only, I did a house job for what, three or four months, before I was called up, during the War, and there one was beginning to learn from, you know, the, the senior, the sister on the ward and other people as to how to, just, just beginning. But all through the War, of course, one met all sorts of awful things that one just learnt to tolerate. And then coming back and doing the work at Hammersmith, one again was learning. Never taught at medical school, that I can remember.

What would you say was the main task of the GP within the whole medical system, when you first began in practice in Slough?

The main task was to try and be a family doctor. It may sound a generalisation, but you had to fight hard, you know, especially when the National Health Service came in, to be a family doctor. You know, and, and try and ...

When you say, sorry, when you say "family doctor" ...

Rather than a GP.

Could you, can you explain the difference to me?

Yes, it was just to keep continuity in the family, and, you know, hope that you could keep patients that you could see right through. They, they very often moved away, unfortunately. But, no, you want to try to treat the whole, and I hope to goodness this doesn't sound priggish, but what with the very fine Medical Officer of Health we had in this area, we, we had a very good understanding and, as I think I mentioned before, with the midwives and with the district nurses, were able to keep, oh, and the two health visitors attached, a tremendously close, close eye on the whole family, rather than just the one patient in it, at the time. Does that help to explain?

Why is it so important to maintain that continuity?

Well, in a place like Slough it, it was, for some reason.

Can you explain why?

No. I think there was an awful lot of upsets in the families, you know. There was a lot of available money, a lot of the youngsters had more money than my children ever had to spend, and, you know, with the usual disruptions and so on, that that could cause. You'd go into families, you know, and they would all be watching the box, they paid no attention to the doctor at all. So there was always this element.

Just picking you up on that point, what was the standing of the doctor in the local community, during the forties and fifties, let's say.

That varied very much, depending on, on the person. I mean, we definitely had a multi-racial society here, and the Pakistanis and the Indians and so on, tremendous respect, to me, anyway - Dr. Sahib, sort of thing. But, oh, it varied a lot. It depended, very often, where they'd come from.

Did those attitudes change over the years that you've been here?

In the practice one felt, yes, yes. But a lot of it wasn't just because of me, it was very often my staff, the people we had in reception, our nurse/receptionist and whatever. I mean, they had, they dealt and made the thing as I felt a practice should be, you know, the whole thing ... we didn't call each other by first names, it was always "Nurse" or "Miss So and So" and the rest of

it, and there was just that little bit of a standard that I somehow felt gave the thing a, a feeling of ... I don't know, there was respect there.

Was it important that you let people know where, where they were in the organisation of the practice, let's say.

Do you mean the staff?

Well, and patients.

Yes. To a certain degree, again, not to be pompous, but it was run with a certain amount of what you would call "friendly discipline", and by gosh, it was very good. We had super, you know, it was great fun amongst ourselves. And we had these very regular meetings of everybody, sometimes even the cleaning lady, which, which was a great help, with all the, the people from the edge, the psychiatric social workers and the social workers, and so on. And that, that made a tremendous difference.

This was in the second practice ...

Oh yes, yes, yes.

... that you organised this.

Well, we didn't have accommodation in the first one, or, or the same sort of thing. I mean, the first practice we, we certainly had district nurse attachment. No, no, I think to some extent myself and, and, and my partners, were only too happy to develop it the way we wanted in the second one. And we did some, what you would call very minor research, in that, about getting children vaccinated and everything else. The Executive Council - I keep calling it this, they probably had a different name at the beginning - to do research in, where children were about the time of vaccination. For instance, would they come to us, or would they be done at school and the rest of it. And, and one or two of our children were in boarding schools, you know, elsewhere, Cheltenham, or whatever, and we discovered, we got two clerks came down from the Committee, this was before computers, and went through our files and did all this for us. And we found a lot of very interesting data of this sort, in conjunction with the Medical Officer of Health, you see. So there was a lot of this going on, which was very useful.

What would you say was the most satisfying part of your job?

I liked it all. I mean, I know that old men, looking back, forget an awful lot of the trauma and everything else, but really, the one decision I made not to go on and do hospital work, and after all I'd got my doctorate and everything else, was to, to become a GP. Really never regretted it.

Are there elements of it which are, which were frustrating?

Yes. The money. Definitely the, the thing. I remember very much, there was a judge, a Mr. Justice Finnemore, I may have got the name wrong, but I remember toasting that, that good man, when he allowed us to get some of our backpay, or something, because we often got pay awards, and then a bit was taken back into some Cameron Fund or some other fund, and we never got the money, and we were bringing up children. We, we were, you know, having all the problems that young couples have, as you must know yourself. Worse nowadays, I would have thought, with the mortgage business and everything else. So, no, I, I think it was the ... we didn't look for an awful lot, but we weren't being paid as we might, but gradually, of course, one realised that, though one had been putting the little bit of money one had, with the help of bank overdrafts, into improving the practice a bit, as regards decoration and furniture and the rest of it, we were gradually, of course, getting an awful lot of help with our pay and the rest of it, towards practice, which was very good. And latterly, it became much better.

Can you put your finger on when salaries started to ... *[End of Tape 4 - Side A]*

It was certainly in the late sixties, and the year would have been when Sir Arthur Porritt, now Lord Porritt, was President of the BMA, because I, he was a friend of mine, and I remember him smiling at me once, at some meeting I was at, and saying, "Well, you chaps aren't doing too badly now, are you!" And I had to admit that things were looking up.

What were things like in the fifties?

Oh, pretty ... pretty, pretty tough. I mean, the other thing I think one has to bring in, I don't know if this was with everyone, but some people in the family said that it took me about ten years to settle down after the War. There's one or two say I've never settled down! (LAUGHS) You know, there were lots of things - bringing up a young family. And, as I say, practice was toughish in those days.

Why did it take you so long to settle down?

Well, I mean, I had a lot of power and everything else, I mean, I could pick up a phone and get an aeroplane to fly me from Athens to Salonika in the job I had. I mean, I was on the senior staff in Greece, and Land Forces, Greece, and, you know, it was ... and I'd been trained to this, and I had my own command. I had two, two hats, you see. I was not only a malariologist, Senior Malariologist, Land Forces, Greece, for the whole of Greece and the islands, but I had my own unit too, so it was, it was very good.

So you had some difficulties, did you ...

I could write letters, oh yes, I could write letters to myself, you see, from my unit up to the Headquarters. And this is a great help. And, you know, there was this sense of power and command and everything else.

Was it a shock, then, moving back into civilian life?

Well, yes. It, it was very difficult. And in Northampton, my wife's uncle, a very very busy GP, was first class, a great chap, but he had a very busy practice. He had gained from other practices, the other chaps being away at the War, and it was a very busy life, and, you know, starting off in just a small house with all the narrow implications of things, and having no money at all, of course, I, I had no, nothing behind me. When I qualified, I only asked from my father for a new suit, and that was that. That's, that's how I started off.

Did you ever consider staying in the Army?

No. Very, I'd, I was asked to. They very much wanted me, I mean, a General came over and stood me a dinner in, in Athens, and, and there had been a, another high-ranking officer in the Army Medical Services, and they were very very keen I stayed on. But I'd had enough of it by then. Because my brother, you see, late in the War, had been killed, and I was the last male, so to speak, to carry on any family if there was to be one. So there were, there were, there was this decision.

What was it you most missed about the Army when you left?

Not a lot. Truly. And it's the same as when I decided to retire relatively early. Once I've made a decision, I don't hark back. No. No. I don't, I don't get any disturbance that way. Somebody says it's part of the Army training that, you know, you're trained to make decisions, and that's it. I, I just, I don't know.

Can you tell me something about ...

I'm not saying I didn't enjoy the Army, I, I, the companionship and the challenge and everything else. Oh no, I enjoyed that very much.

Can you tell me something now about the practice in Slough, the first one.

Yes. Yes.

Whereabouts was the surgery situated?

Right bang in the middle of the town. Very very close to the, to the town centre, and within a stone's throw of where Herschel had his, his telescope. Herschel Cottage, which was a pretty large old building, was virtually next door.

Was it easy for your patients to get to?

Yes. Yes, it was. I mean, there was, we had no car park at all, but they could park quite nearby in those days, before yellow lines or anything else. And not so many, they didn't, not a lot of them had cars, you see.

What sort of building was it?

It was a very big old building. It would have been early Victorian or even a bit earlier than that. And it was tall, it had a basement in which the practice was, which was one of the things I didn't care for very much, semi-basement, shall we say. And then it had one, two, three floors before that, and it was semi-detached, and the other half was a boys' school, a boys' prep school. So it was one of the big old buildings of the town, so to speak. It doesn't exist any more.

What happened on the other floors?

Oh, that was my, that was the partner's house.

Did you live there when you first came?

Only when he went to Ireland for holidays, and it was necessary, in those days, for the telephone thing. We left our own house and went and lived there for a month. But we only did that once. We never did it again.

The senior partner lived there ...

Yes.

... permanently?

Yes.

Had he been living there for a long time?

He had come over some time, I suppose, in the middle of the War, from Ireland, and became Assistant and then partner to a Dr. Britten, who had been there for a good many years before the War, and before that, had been in some other part of the town. And Britten had appointments with Aspro and Horlicks, I think. He did a bit of what you might call "occupational health" with these factories.

Can you describe the surgery to me?

The first one?

Yes.

Yes. You came in through, down steps into this semi-basement. And on the left-hand side was a very small room which became my surgery. It had a sink ... facilities, and the rest of it, and very little space for sterilisation and everything else, just room for a desk, and an examination couch. In the next room, it was quite large, well, it was a little bit bigger than the room we are sitting in now, which will give you some idea, and it had a big desk, which was fairly central, big windows that looked out on to an area, you know, as I say, semi-basement. And then, beyond that, was the waiting room, which was about the size of this as well, perhaps a little smaller. And then there was a very small cubby-hole place in which there was the telephone box and the secretary's desk, secretary/receptionist, because that's all we had in those days. No facilities for nurses to come in or anything else. And then there were steps leading from this up into the partnership, into the practice house.

Would you say that the surgery was well-equipped?

No. No. Not, not as I would have wanted it.

Even then?

Even then, yes.

You weren't totally satisfied with it.

Oh I was, no, I was never totally satisfied once I saw how things were going. And I could see the need for expansion, because of the number of patients we had, you see.

What was the main thing wrong with the surgery?

Well, I think it was the smaller room. The quality of the walls, being a semi-basement, you, I constantly was having to deal with damp, and with repairing walls and the rest of it, because in those days, one did an awful lot of one's own work for economy reasons.

Equipment-wise, would you say you were up-to-date?

Well, ... just. Yes. I mean, we had a telephone set-up which we organised through to the, the other partner's house, and we could wind a handle and put the phone calls through to, you know, a few miles away, that sort of thing. But, sterilising equipment, of course, was, in those days, entirely by boiling. We'd no steam or any other type of autoclave type of thing. And I had a microscope, but we didn't use an awful lot. I could have done, I would have liked a little bit more laboratory facilities for doing bloods and that sort of thing, on hand, as it were. There just wasn't room, frankly. I wasn't stuck in that smaller room all the time, I mean, when I was on duty and my partner was off, one would use the other. You know, it wasn't that one was completely stuck in that one small room.

Was it comfortable for your patients?

I, again, they were, it, the seating could have been better. There were Moran (?? can't catch - 116) benches round the, the edge, with a big, big old-fashioned table in the middle, full of ancient magazines, or whatever patients brought in. We didn't buy anything for them!

How did it compare with other practices in the area?

I was only in a few, and it, they were all, while I'm talking now, let me think, one, two, three, four, because ... we were all pretty friendly and helped each other. With four others, I would have thought we were, I think we were all much about the same in those days.

Did you have an appointments system?

Not in those days, no. Not in, not in that first practice. People just came in and sat and waited. And there was always quite a bit of an embarrassment on Saturday evenings and the rest of it, when, if there was a long queue in the cinema, a big cinema across the road, of course, we'd find a lot of the people came in and sat in our surgery and took the chance they wouldn't be

called, and then slipped off to the cinema. Now that sort of thing went on in those days, so that eventually I gave up the Saturday evening surgery altogether, for that reason.

When did you introduce an appointments system?

Not until I was, I was the, in the other practice.

Thinking now about the stresses and strains of a GP's life, would you say that general practice affected your own or your colleagues' health in any way?

Well, not my own health, because it's always very difficult to remember when I was ill, you know, I, maybe every five to eight years I'd get a, a fever, and shook like hell because of previous malaria, but, or something like that. But, and then, of course, I've had injuries, back injuries and stuff, but no, no, I don't think so, except from the point of view of irritability with one's wife and children when one came back overtired, and the rest of it. And perhaps family things blew up more than they would have. But not, not to any extent that we were influenced very much. So, as I may have mentioned previously, one of the reasons I was quite happy to decide to retire when I was 60, and retired at 61, was the effect the practice was having on my wife, who then was having a little bit of problems, menopausal, blood pressure and the rest of it. Not to any great extent. She was still carrying on as a magistrate and everything, but if I was out at night, she would say, "Now, was that call necessary?" and the rest of it. And very often couldn't sleep if she had been wakened by me going out. So this, as much as anything, I think, and in a lot of the practices, the strain was on the wife and not necessarily the doctor himself, who soldiered on. And a lot of the thing I've always said about these statistics, I don't want to bore you with this, but a chap who retired at 60, his life expectancy was 12 years, but if he retired, if he worked between 60 and 65, it was only three years after that. And I think that a lot of this was reflected by stress between the doctor and his wife as well. I can't be certain.

I've also read over the past few months that doctors are, are particularly liable to, to high rates of suicide ...

Yes.

... alcoholism.

Yes.

Would you say that that's the case in your experience?

We, in the area, had one chap who was Irish, who certainly knocked the whiskey back, in a big way. And we heard of others. Two, again, Irish, in the High Wycombe area. But as far as all the doctors round about, I don't know of any that were named as being, you know, dangerously alcoholic. I, myself, never ever drank if I was on standby or on duty. But I must say, I drank, very often, far too much when I was off duty! And enjoyed it very much! (LAUGHS)

As a way of relaxing?

Oh yes, very much so, a way of relaxing.

What did you do with your leisure time?

Well, I'm a very keen fisherman, and I tie my own flies. And I paint. Funnily enough, when I was busy in the practice, I was having paintings exhibited in London, in, in the Royal Institute of Oil Painters and all the rest of it. And, with retirement, that rather sloped off. There wasn't the same challenge to get things done. But, and then I was always gardening, I, you know, this garden has shrunk now, we've sold a lot of it off. But I, I was always fully occupied. And then taking the children to, to places and so on. Family, family life, you know.

When did you take up painting?

Oh, I think about the age of 10, when I was conscious that I had a little more of an ability than was maybe usual. But then it's in the family on both sides. I very, I had a very skilled great-grandfather and aunts on both sides, very fine painters and ... and my parents.

And is it an unusual thing for a doctor to be interested in art?

Oh, not at all. Oh Lord, no! The, I, I often, people often ask why I hadn't joined the Medical Society in London, or the Medical Artists and the rest of it. Oh no, and we held here, three or four years ago, in aid of the local Thames Valley Hospice, an art exhibition at our own Post-Graduate Medical Centre. And the Duchess of Norfolk came along, and she and I had a great chat about our techniques and everything else, because she does Christmas cards and things for this very Hospice, and we had some marvellous, some, some lovely work. Not necessarily the doctors, sometimes the doctors' wives. But, oh no, it's quite ... quite the thing. And, and music as well. We have a very flourishing musical section in our Post-Graduate Medical Centre.

Why do you think doctors are so interested in art? Is there any explanation for that?

No, I, I can't explain it. I think it's, maybe a lot of people who chose, themselves, to be doctors, were genetically primed with the ability to play the piano, or to, or to paint, or, or whatever, given the opportunity, I think it was just born in them.

Are there any connections between art and medicine?

There could be. Because, of course, rightly so, a lot of people now are, are training and teaching disturbed children and so on, by means of art therapy, and the rest of it, and there is a connection there. And I remember, as a medical student, being very interested in drawings done and paintings done by schizophrenics, you know, weird, abstract things, but there was a tremendous amount of power in the way they'd use the paint and everything else. So I suppose there's a link there too.

How much time did you manage to get off during the week?

Ah, now, in the first practice, it, it was a little difficult, as you can maybe gather. But in my own practice, we had an absolutely set rota. I always had a whole day off. This was usually a Thursday, but sometimes in the practice, it varied, it could be a Wednesday. But we, each partner had a whole day off, because one discovered in the first practice that, if you're going to take a half day, you never did, there was always work carried through into the afternoon, or whatever, in a busy practice. The whole day really made it free, and the patients got to know that, "Oh well, doctor's away that particular day." And that allowed one to get off to the Cotswolds to fish, or something, as well, or spend a whole day with the family somewhere. So there was always one whole day off. And then every three weekends, one was off, because of the working with another practice with two partners, in which we did this rota of four chaps. And one, one, one wasn't off. I mean, one always had patients to see. I did, anyway. You know, a carry on from a recent midwifery, or a carry on from some really severe illness, you were always popping into somebody. But that was different. You, you could go in your sports clothes and see them, and then you were free, that sort of thing.

How much annual holiday were you able to take?

I never ever, I think, got my, my full quota. But we used to try and get at least a fortnight in the early practice. And then later on, one could have, have longer off. And towards the end, when we were going to, say, Australia, one could arrange, by getting someone in from outside, in fact, it was a dear doctor from Beaconsfield, would come into the partnership for the month, to help the chaps out. But we never ever employed locums, other than in that respect. We never had outside people. There were always, it would always be a friend who came in. And when, another time I went to Australia, the old senior partner, whom I'd taken over from, came and worked for a month. And then he was called off to a sister dying in Canada, and then this dear fellow from Beaconsfield came in. You see, there was always this, we were able to, and financially, of course, it was a great help.

Whereabouts did you take your holidays in the early days?

One went up to Scotland to see the parents, and my wife's family were local, Buckinghamshire, so there was no problem about seeing them. But, later on, we used to go and stay in a house that an Eton master had, down in Cornwall, and from then, we then took another place in Cornwall, and we went to Cornwall for years. We always booked the place up each year, as we went. And also, in connection with that, we'd also holiday in, in Scotland, in an uncle's, either in the old family house, or in an uncle's house. So, it, it depended.

Were you a member of any Clubs or Societies in the area?

Yes, I belonged to the local Art Society, and exhibited at the local Arts Show, for a bit, for a short time. I belonged, for a short time, to the Scots Society, but gave that up. There just wasn't time. I became Vice-President of various odd things in the town. There was a Community Centre place, but again, I usually hadn't time. I became, what is the junior Rotary thing, before you're 40? The name will come back in a moment. And then I found I would never be in time for the lunches, because, you know, I was with a patient or something, and gave that up! (LAUGHS) Oh dear! What's it called? It's a junior Rotary thing. What else? I then belonged to the ... London Sketch Club, and I used to go into the London Sketch Club, and I was sometimes Chairman there, actually. I became, and I'm still a member, but I very rarely go now. Most of the fellows I knew, the son of Heath Robinson, and Gilchick (?? sp.) who used to draw for *Punch* and a lot of other well-known artists, great friends. And then I belonged, of course, when it was founded, to the Post-Graduate Medical Centre here. One has always covenanted money towards that from the start. And, are you thinking of other things? My wife ran Barnardo's, who we took

upon, we founded here, with others, the Cancer Relief, the local Windsor, Eton and Slough Cancer Relief Society, which we still ... they've now made us ex-officio, we're Vice-Presidents, or something. So, oh, and lots of other things. I never became governor of a school. My wife did that. I never sat on the Bench, she did that for 33 years.

Would you have liked to?

No. No. The practice, no, as I think I said earlier on, my practice was a busy one, you know, we'd, we'd a lot of patients, and, and I gave my time to that and the family first. I belonged to the Conservative Association. And, are you asking about these Clubs as an interest?

Yes.

I'm a Patron of the Freedom Association. You may gather, I'm a right-wing Conservative. Not so right-wing as I was. What else? I think here, things will crop up afterwards, but one had quite a lot of things going on. Oh, Good Lord! I suppose the main thing, instead of taking over the offer of commanding a Territorial Unit in Hounslow, of course, I did my St. John work, and became a serving brother, and eventually was elevated to be an Officer of the Order. But for years, I, I was a Divisional Surgeon, and then Corps Surgeon, and then the Area Surgeon, lectured a tremendous lot for St. John, and examined in County and in Regional competitions, and used to travel, at weekends, to Oxford and places, to examine for St. John. And I examined in the national competitions in London as well. And then decided, again, when I was about 50, 55, something, to opt out. And it was very convenient, because there was a boundary change here, and instead of being St. John, Buckinghamshire, I would have become St. John, Berkshire. And in the change, I got put on the reserve list. Now, now they just send me stuff, you know, to, to come to various big functions and the rest of it, if not, to send them a subscription, sort of thing.

Did you entertain much in the evenings at home?

We had open house to doctor friends, you know, who'd pop in, especially the ones connected with the partnership. And we did have some glorious parties. Mainly they were medical people, and then, as the practice grew and we became more established, there were friends who were patients, and we entertained a fair bit, yes, in a smallish sort of way, you know, they'd have them in, they'd come at the weekend. Now we still entertain them, those that have survived, and they come for lunches mainly, so they're home by evening.

Would you say most of your friends were other doctors?

Nowadays, yes, because an awful lot of our other friends have either moved out of the area, or have died.

But in the, when you first arrived, let's say.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Not necessarily from local areas. There were friends from elsewhere. The doctor who, the man who was doctor at Pinewood, for instance, he, he became a friend and we saw them a lot, and ... they were mostly medical, you see, because my wife being a doctor as well, her friends tended, to some extent, to be doctors too.

Was it any sort of conscious decision that you would mix socially with doctors?

No. No. Oh no, not at all. But we tried to avoid, and I'd always been told to do this when I was a boy, even, you know, when I was going to this Dr. Slessor in Fraserburgh, when I was a medical student. He said, "Never get fixed that your day off is the day you go and play bridge with so and so", and this sort of thing. And we avoided that type of thing.

Would you say that, or do doctors have a particular type of humour, or a view of the world?

Oh, I think so, yes. But it does vary. But at the London Sketch Club, I heard the most superb stories, because it's a terribly Bohemian place, and on Fridays, sometimes they still do sketching and then they follow on, but they have opera singers, and magicians, and all sorts of people perform there on a Friday evening, and the tales one heard! And I was often in great supply. I remember a doctor in Stoke Poges ringing me up, a Welshman, I'd heard some very very fine Welsh stories. He was going off to a reunion somewhere in Wales, and he'd ring me up, and he'd say, "Now, you know, can you tell me ...." in those days, when I could remember them! And they were whimsicalities rather, you know, they could be given at mixed, mixed company.

Could you describe what a doctor's sense of humour is, is like?

No. I think we vary a lot, because of our upbringing. I, I, my father was known for his, what, it's an awful phrase, the Scottish "porky" sense of humour, but it's, it's just the one off quiet thing that has come and gone in a flash, almost, you know. That's the sort of wit that, that one rather likes. Or, really lovely sort of whimsicalities.

There's nothing in a doctor's life, I mean, the common experiences, which ...

Oh, there are ...*[CAN'T CATCH - 438]* is there?Oh, there are the most delightful stories too, of course, about midwives, and various catastrophes, so-called, in, in practice, yes. I think as one gets older, one gets out of that sort of thing, though. I was never terribly fond of the Rabelaisian sort of thing. The really dirty story, so to speak, you know. I mean, one was never awfully keen on that. The clever one is the sort of thing I, I appreciated.

Did you attend church while you were in practice?

Not very much. I'm afraid that both my wife and I have drawn away a lot from church. Actually, anonymously, we have given to the local church down the road. The roof was going out of order, but ... and we go on a few occasions. But mainly now, we're only attending services if they're related to funerals and the rest of it.

Is this a recent thing that you've ...

For years, yes, yes, yes. But we never ever really took our children to church. I mean, that, that was the depths of it, if you like, to give you an idea of ...

Did religion mean more or less to you, as an adult?

It meant less, I think. After experiencing visiting the Biblical ...*[End of Tape 4 - Side B]*

So, you were just saying about these Biblical sites?

Yes, one realised that, you know, one realised that Christ, for instance, being a very fine and astonishing person, but the connection to a Godhead is a, is a difficult step, just as the Virgin Birth is too. And, I'd like not to go into it. I still believe in a God, you know, but ... it's an awfully difficult thing to discuss, just off the cuff. I've, I've done it with the local ministers quite often, of course.

So it's a very personal sort of thing?

I think it is. And I think it is with my wife, as well. But she, I think, is more detached than I am, which is probably, to some extent, why we didn't get together and make sure the children went to church. But they were both brought up, of course, in a Catholic school, so they were Protestants and got a good education there, and got very good religious instruction. So we've done a, you know, been ... felt that we've left them out of it altogether.

Is there a connection between your own personal religion and your medical practice?

No. I think a lot of my patients knew that I was Scottish, in the sense I went to the local Trinity Church, the St. Andrews Church, because I did turn up there from time to time, and less so now. So there was that element. But I never ever, I hope that none of the patients knew what my religious feelings were, or what my politics were, ever. But they must have known, of course, when, the people who were connected to various things I belonged to.

But did your religious beliefs sort of influence yourself in a way?

I think, I think in the way that I had thought things out, I think I did help, I could help people an awful lot, who were terminally ill. I do feel I was able in that way. And, of course, I had very good rapport with the ministers who were Church of England, Evangelistic types, at the main church in, which was central to the main part of the practice. They were very firm friends, and, you know, one could freely discuss things with them.

And you mentioned that you were a, a right-wing Conservative.

Yes. I was brought up very much, my mother was, and I think I mentioned very earlier on, the connection with Robert Boothby. Conservative and Unionist was the, was the term.

And this is a family tradition, let's say, is it?

It certainly isn't in the next generation. I think that after Sussex and the other things, my daughters are, are by no means, no, no, no, and, you know, they read *The Guardian*. As Jonathan Porritt says, they take *The Guardian*, and they re-cycle it! (LAUGHS)

Can you tell me why you've got the political views you have? Why do you vote Conservative?

I, yes, well, again, you don't want a dissertation on this, but the ... I always felt that, somehow, we got more stable government. And I was very concerned at the power of the Unions being misused in the early days. Now, I may have been entirely wrong in this, but I could, somehow, feel that the more striking that went on, the more they were digging a pit for themselves in, you know, later problems. Later, in, in the years I was with Southern Electricity, of course, so we had one or two real firebrands, and one of them is still on the go, I notice. I had a great respect for the chaps in the four Unions that had to do with the electricity supply industry. But there again, they were fellows who had, some of them, university or technical college training, and had good minds, and knew how far, very often, they could go. They were

also dealing with a fairly skilled workforce. But I got very much to appreciate the care they took in the health and safety side of things. And had a great respect for them, and got on very well with them. Quite a few of the fellas who were the trouble-makers were putting their kids through medicine! (LAUGHS) They were going, shall we say, one up in the scale.

Just going back to your practice now, the first practice, could you describe a typical day for me?

Yes. One got up to that practice at nine in the morning, and you did a morning surgery until the place was empty. And then you went off and did your morning visits, and if there were, if they carried over into afternoon, then you did them. And if you had insurance work, either visiting cases out on behalf of an insurance company, or if you were doing medical insurance exams, the usual life assurance things, one fitted those in in the afternoon or the evening. But in this partnership, we started, quite soon, having a surgery in the late afternoon, at 4 o'clock to about 6 o'clock, and again, without appointments, people came in and you saw them until the place was empty. And then you did an evening visit or two, if one had them. And then, of course, you carried on doing calls if you were on duty. But that was in the first practice.

What time would it be when you would finally get home in the evening?

Well, that varied very very much. But the idea of having the 4-6 surgery fitted in with business in the factories, and I think our practice patterned itself to the fact that people in some of the factories, like Mars, worked shifts, and they would, you had to be careful about this sort of thing. What the blighters would do, without an appointment system, they'd go home and put on a collar and tie, and come and see us before they went to the cinema, and, and you got, you fitted things in, in a way, to help them, but not to be taken advantage of. And then, in some cases, Mars people worked difficult shifts and then had three days off. With one of my chaps who worked with Mars, I used to go fishing with him on my day off, because, you know, this is how they worked. But that fitted in very well with their arrangements, the 4-6. But one might not be home until 8 o'clock at night.

How many patients would you usually see in a morning surgery?

That would vary tremendously, according the time of year. There was an old doctor told me that practices never ever got busy until the 17th of January. Now, do you know it worked out that this is when the measles and, and a whole lot of other things started rearing their ugly heads, that gave a lot of work, and chicken pox and stuff, in these early days, depending on which one was due. So January, February, March, could be very very busy, in the area. But, then again, the awful flu epidemic was in the autumn, wasn't it, because my partner was away on holiday in, in, it must have been August, and that, well, you know, you worked on day and night.

Could you put a figure, roughly, on how many patients on average, you would see?

No. No. Very difficult to do, because one risks inaccuracy, I think. But a minimum of ten, on an average, if you're averaging through the year, a minimum of ten. And it could easily be more.

And how about when you went out to visit?

Visits in those days were, we had a big elderly population in the, a poor population in the village of Chalvey, which was very near the practice house, part of Slough now. But this, there was a lot of visiting of elderly sick, who couldn't come to the surgery. And, you know, there was a lot of that. And then I always had a system of, these people were, were often down for fortnightly or, or monthly visits anyway, to just see everything was all right.

How much time were you able to spend with each patient?

When you're in the surgery, you sometimes, Army fashion, saw them at the trot, you know. But I, I perhaps spent a little bit longer. I had learnt, again, before I was in practice, that always examine the part that they're complaining about. Now this took a bit longer, because that meant undressing. But it was a thing that never ever failed. The number of times one has heard of complaints where it's been substantiated that the doctor never even bothered to look.

Was that a common thing?

I, I, I knew of certain local doctors where this happened. But it certainly would never have happened with me.

So if a patient came to you, complaining of a throat ...

You always looked.

... you always examined them?

You always looked at the throat, and, and the rest of it. So this took a little bit longer, but it would be five to ten minutes.

And that was sufficient?

Usually, yes. You know, you had an awful lot of the general run-of-the-mill things.

Did you find, as the years went by, that you were spending more or less time with patients?

No, I think it was very much the same, even when I had an appointments system, the thing being, though, that with the appointments system, one had very often, whereas in the old days, you carried on with the chap who took a very long time, you know, because he'd come and that was it. With the appointment system, you very frequently had to say somebody, "Now, look you'd better come back this afternoon, I'll be free between two and half past", or "I'll come and see you at home", or "Make an appointment", you know, "for another day", depending on what the circumstance was, because you couldn't keep the people with appointments waiting too long. That was the only difference. I'm sure it didn't alter much my average time.

So you examined a lot of your patients?

Well, you always looked at where the pain was. Didn't necessarily mean taking their clothes off, you know, you'd move muscles or something without ... but ...

How much would you explain to them about their illness?

I think, I think a fair bit, unless it didn't pay for them to know at all, or to give them ideas, you know, with the neurotics! You learnt, you know, over the years, as to how much you told them.

Were there various patients who you would think, you know, it pays not to tell them too much?

Oh, indeed, yes. Yes.

And certain types of illness, as well ...

Well, cancers and things, for instance, had to be managed in a particular way. My first partner, with again, an Irish, very susceptible family, told a mother, who was an excitable, lovely lady, that her son had only got so long to live, which was true. But, oh dear! The problem that poor lady, and the son gave to him, and then eventually to me, because they wouldn't see him, you see. It, it was just unfortunate. It was bad luck. He didn't usually, and I may have made mistakes like this myself, I don't know of, of course, but, you know, it was a question of management, depending on circumstance.

Did you find that you had to simplify things a lot to patients?

Oh, an awful, oh yes, with the Asians and the rest of it. And, I mean, you had to use words like "gas" and so on, and ... (LAUGHS), you know, as far as the bowels were concerned, they had a different phraseology.

And what about with the British patients?

Oh certainly, oh yes, very often. Depending on their level of education and so on.

Did you find you had to use their own terminology to them, or a way of explaining any function?

Oh, oh, oh, I think one did, oh yes, I think so, mmm.

And when they came to see you, was it always clear to you what they were describing?

No. Not always. And I had a long walk between my desk and the door. I had a very big consulting room, really large, and very often I never got the real clue as to what they'd come about until they'd reached the door. The, the, the thing before that had all been, you know, they'd been trying to make up their minds. This, this could happen.

Just going back to those early days as well, when you were examining a woman patient.

Yes.

Did that cause problems?

Yes. In that, in that place, because the, the last, our little cubby-hole was on the other side of the passageway of people coming in, and one had to bring her in, if one, you know, the room wasn't available, and this, to some patients, was a bit of an embarrassment. And there was no room for proper screening. I mean, in my, in the consulting room, I constructed virtually for myself, in the house I took over, I had two examination couches and two screens, and, you know, things were very much more private, and I had an intercom to my nurse, so they always knew there was a certain amount of supervision, even if she wasn't there, she certainly could be nearby, sitting at another desk, apparently writing, or something, but she was there while, while I was behind the screen with the patient. She, you know, it made just all the difference to the confidence of the patient, perhaps, and, and certainly to me. You could never get somebody complaining I'd done something, you know, that I shouldn't have.

Did you offer any other services at the practice? I'm thinking of things like midwifery ...

Oh yes.

... minor surgery.

Yes, one did a fair bit of minor surgery. One removed sebaceous cysts and everything, because we had the facilities in this place, you see. And we had a, midwives came to be instructed. When I left my room, the, the midwives had the trainee midwives in as part of the, you know, public health set-up. That was a service, if you like. My room would be used for that. Pharmaceutical companies used to lay on, as I think, snack lunches, and local doctors would meet. Perhaps that wasn't the service that was perhaps the right thing, I don't know! But the, what other services? You know, we had our vaccination set-up, and so on.

Did you offer people advice?

We'd ante-natal examinations, of course. Counselling, a bit. I never went in for, as some of my friends are doing now, for full-time sex therapy stuff, you know. I, I limited that to, you know, where again, the family doctoring came in, when sisters, we realised what they were talking about, and it, it was a case of incest, you see, with their father. Well, you had to deal with that, on it's own, and then get outside help or, or whatever. One did that just as part of family doctoring.

Did you give people advice on contraception?

Oh, Lord, yes! Very much so. But then, of course, locally, eventually, we had the, one of the foremost contraception Family Planning Clinics in the country, which, of course, was headed by her ladyship next door.

And did you get women approaching you enquiring about abortions?

Yes. We got Irish girls coming over, and damn nearly having their babies on the examination couch, you know, we had that side of it as well. Last minute sort of things.

What could you do for people, these women who came to you before the mid-sixties?

Well, they were referred to our local gynae people. And they were superb. We, at that time, had ... Stan Simmons came a little later, he's now President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. He was one of our people. And Tom Eland, who, unhappily, died, was another. And they were so good that they had the, the high-powered, they were, they were a teaching unit for the Royal College, for the, for the FRCOG, so you can imagine the standard we had in those days.

Were there any illegal abortions done in the area?

There were. There were. There was a local nursing home, so-called, and I've known of policemen perched up a tree trying to look in through the window! (LAUGHS) Yes. We got to know about them. And I was called out, as I told you I did, I wasn't ever Police Surgeon, but I did police work, and we had a patient of mine who died, and I reported this, because the circumstances were a bit suspicious. She'd also, it was a case of self-poisoning, but it was very suspicious and very odd circumstances. And before I knew it, I had the CID down beside me, and saying, "Have you touched anything?" And I said, "No." And she was, this patient of mine, had been *the* king-pin abortionist for a wide area, with knitting needles, or something like that. A very handsome, very well-spoken lady. But she'd been making a, a fortune. And then, eventually, realising, I think, that the police were on to her, and she, it was suicide.

Did you find that people came to you for advice about non-medical matters?

Oh yes. And an awful lot, and my wife came in on this, as I hinted before, we got other doctors and their wives coming for advice. And young locums would ring me up, you know, when they were in the other partnership, and, oh yes, I think one was asked. You mean advice about other things?

Yes, patients ...

Oh yes. Housing, stocks and shares, all sorts of things. They seemed to think I was well-off, eventually. And, you know, what shall I do about this and that. Oh yes, and a lot on insurance, because, of course, I was doing a lot of insurance work for various companies, and, you know, they'd ask, you know, "Is this a good thing?" or whatever. Yes, I think, there again, family doctoring, one was asked about ... patients one had known for many years, one example we were talking about yesterday, where a very pretty, very clever girl at the local school, wanted to become a nun, to the great distress of her, of her parents. And she did. And she went off to a closed convent eventually. She's now out of it, and she's running an art, an art gallery in, in Albuquerque, in, wherever that is, New Mexico. And, you know, we still know what Rosemary's up to! It's, it's interesting you see, you get the continuity in these families. But I was consulted a lot by these unfortunate parents. The father was an Episcopalian, Anglican. The mother was a

knowledgeable about this. This is, this was his hobby, you see. And he now has this shop down in New Street, that sells all this Army surplus stuff. And he's doing quite reasonably well, considering there's a recession on. I'm surprised he sells any of it, but he does. And so he's, in a way, he's not academic. He's not an academic. He had almost a dyslexia for numbers, if you could use that expression. He had no idea, he was quite blank. He couldn't tell the time until he was about 14.

So you never thought of encouraging him into a medical career?

No, he wasn't, he wasn't cut out for it at all. No. He wasn't cut out for anything academic. No, he ...

And your other son was?

Schoolwise, yes. Oh yes, quite different at school. School was hard for Tim. School was very hard for Tim. He had this awful number problem. He couldn't, he couldn't get the hang of numbers at all. He, he, he couldn't tell the time, except by counting it. He never got a picture of a ... I mean, we don't tell the time by looking at the time, we look at a clock, don't we, and the shape of it tells us, you know. Well, he was quite unable to do that until he was about 14 or 15. He used to have to say, "The big hand's on X, and the little hand's on Y", and count it round. And his number difficulty was that great. And he, he was never ... he was only, he was good at the things like the history, and the geography, and, you know, the sort of more of that type. And he's very much into this Napoleonic Society. It's very interesting. I went to Waterloo with them about four years ago. There was the, do you remember the centenary, whatever it was, it wouldn't be centenary, but, you know, the, they had the battle, they re-enacted the Battle of Waterloo, at Waterloo. I went with them. It was the most wonderful weekend I've ever spent. Marched ten miles that day! But it was a wonderful weekend. And he's right into this, into all this Napoleonic business, and that is his, that and, and militaria, and all that. He's very much, he's found his little niche. He's fine. He's fine in that. Of course, he's married now. And, but he wasn't, he wasn't academic, as the others were. I mean, when I say "academic", my eldest daughter's not a particularly bright scholar, but she was bright enough to be a nurse, and this one's got a degree, and David's got a degree, so I mean, you know, they didn't do so badly.

Did David have some qualities which you thought would make him into a doctor?

Oh yes. Yes. He's always been very caring. Yes, he's always been very caring. I thought he would make a good doctor. I think I, I think I did, I wouldn't say I pushed him, I think that would be a bit strong a word, but I think I would say I directed him into the way he should go. And, as it turned, fortunately for him and me, it's turned out right. He's never wavered from it. I think if he wasn't a doctor, he'd be a farmer. I think he might have liked to be a farmer. But he never said he wanted to be a farmer. I mean, it was never ever one of the things he was going to be. He wasn't going to be anything. I mean, he, he hadn't got a clue. And so I, I put him into the sciences, which is obviously where he, he wanted to be, and it just progressed from there. Just another of these taking your opportunities, I think.

Did you ever keep in contact with any of your friends from your student days?

Some of them. Some of them, yes. My greatest friend, the one I told you I went to work with in London, died in March. She was 82. And I kept in quite, when I say close contact, she lived in Portsmouth, and I lived in Worcester, but, I mean, we saw each other quite a bit. She was my daughter's godmother. And we kept in contact with her. And the other one who was a very close friend of mine, who was my eldest daughter's godmother, and I'm her daughter's godmother, unfortunately, was killed in a car crash in, oh, a week before Liz's wedding, and she was married, she's been married 20 years, so ... it, you know, that really broke that up. We drifted, because, don't forget, we finished in 1939, and so we all, a lot of the men were lost. Quite a lot of men in my year didn't come back. And we all separated and went our own ways. And I haven't really had a lot of contact with any of them since. Only this one who was, as I say, was, was, really was my friend. And, as I say, the other girl was killed. So that that really sort of broke the chain, as it were.

Do you think most people in your year went into general practice?

I think they were very varied, very varied. You see, most of the men went in the Army. You see, in 1939, nearly all the men went, went some way into the War, either Army or hospital, or whatever. And the girls, well, I know two or three of the girls were married in the early years of the War, because I, I sort of knew about that. We had a reunion, at the University, I can't remember, was it 30 years qualified? I can't remember now. Some years back, and there weren't all that many of us. Nothing like as big as some of the years, because of that, of course. There were quite a few general practitioners, one or two around here. But I, I don't know about them, in general.

Finally, what would you say has been the biggest change that you've seen during your career?

Antibiotics. Must be. In the treatment in medicine. And, of course, the National Health Service, in the way it works. I would say those are the, the two, only two real features of change. Doctoring's the same. The basic doctoring's the same as it was when I started. You still stand by the bed and wonder what the hell's the matter with the patient! But, yes, I think antibiotics was a tremendous turning point, because that opened up, well, the

Did you find there were many people coming to see you, who really didn't have anything wrong with them?

Well, by virtue of the fact that they came to see you, they obviously had, because that, that was a mental thing, wasn't it, a worry, or ... they maybe only needed reassurance, but, well, fair enough.

Did you feel that you were always, looking back, did you feel that you were always able to offer your patients a good service?

No, not always. In the days when one was really overworked, I would fall asleep when patients were talking to me. And at four o'clock in the afternoon, one was absolutely just flaked out, which was why I tried always to get this ten minutes nap after lunch, that I mentioned earlier on. And I couldn't have been doing my job properly. One was flaked out. Now they talk about being burnt out, and all sorts of fancy phrases that I think have come from America, everyone was just damned tired.

How did you feel about that at the time?

Well, it was, again, part of one's way of life. And perhaps the patients noticed it, I don't know, but you really did nod off when they were talking - late afternoon - and this had nothing to do with my way of life as regards drinking or, or beating it up in any way. This was due to night duties and family whatever.

Did it worry you that this was happening?

One was conscious of it, and thought, "God! This is frightful!" Yes. And so that was, that was bad service. One could never have been really efficient. I then got worried about my, my midwifery skills. Not that anything went wrong, mark you, but I was conscious of the fact that I wasn't doing enough of the mechanical things like forceps deliveries and the rest of it, if they were needed. And getting rusty, so to speak.

So what would have improved your practice at that time?

It's difficult to say, because, you see, I did go to all the places, I went as far as Stoke Mandeville, I went as far as the Princess Elizabeth in Swindon, to do a paediatric course, and to Stoke Mandeville to do a mixed course. I went to all our post-graduate courses here, when I could fit them in.

Were there plenty of refresher courses available?

Oh, first class, yes. Absolutely.

Was this during the fifties?

No. There weren't any, I don't think, that I know of. I can't remember anything in those days, and I wouldn't have had time off in that practice, you know, it wasn't the same clear-cut organisation.

So this was only during the sixties that you were able to get to these things?

Really. Yes, and really after '66, when, when, you know, in my own practice, with the extra, well, you see, there were three of us there, so one of them wasn't in the rota. And one, one could, one could do it.

Didn't the BMA organise anything during the fifties, in the area?

No, there were odd BMA meetings that one went to. I still go to them.

But no refresher courses?

I can't remember any. I can't honestly ... *[End of Tape 5 - Side B]* Did you get that bit in about the, about the marriage? She was, by this time, in Ash Vale, near the Army School of Hygiene, and was doing GP work for, do you know, I must pause here ... I can't remember whether she'd, yes, she had qualified, yes.

Did you have to save before you could get married?

No. I, you see, being abroad all the time, I had my pay sent to Glyn Mills in London, and I had a fair bit of money, enough, no, no.

What did your parents feel about you getting married?

My father had been writing to this girl he hardly ever knew, and I took her home to Strichen, and my stepmother, who was English, and she was accepted by the local community. I mean, it was, it was astonishing that she was English. But, as we mentioned to one of the old and very wealthy farmers in the area, he said, "Oh, well, she's got a good Scots name!", which is Jean, you see! It, it was funny, we were, you know, very isolated in a way, from many things. But, no, it, my father was very pleased. And I know that, until the day he died, he was very pleased that she was the person I married.

So he didn't have to help you out financially at all, before you got married?

No, no, no, oh gosh!

Because of your savings.

Now, look, I don't suppose I helped him as much as I might have, but he never ever could give me any financial help. And I helped, for instance, when the mile long road up to him and the nearby farm, the farmer was paying so much, and I paid the rest, unbeknown to my father, by sending actual cash in notes to my stepmother. You know, that was how I did it. He would have been, I think, rather proud to have just taken the cash from me. But, no, no. It was the other way round. I, I had to help out.

Can you tell me when your children were born?

Yes. The first one, Janet, was when I was with, in the very first year of this assistantship in Northampton, with my wife's uncle, she was born in the hospital in Northampton. And then we moved, not terribly long afterwards, to do a locum in the Englefield Green area, when I heard that I'd got into the practice in Slough. And she died not terribly long after that. That was in 1948, of this cancer, this Wilms (?? ph.) tumour.

And your other children?

There are other children. We, by this time, had very much, when Janet died, the other daughter was well on the way, Mary, who is now in general practice in Brisbane. So that, that was a great comfort, in a way, especially to my wife. And then there was a bit of a, no, and then there was Verity, she must have come about sixteen months afterwards, I think. And then there was a bit of a gap until Alison, the last one. I could give you the years if I looked them up.

And you say one is now in Australia?

One is now doing general practice in Brisbane. And she wanted to be a doctor from the age of eight, which, I think, is pretty unusual.

One is in France?

One is in France. And she's the one who did, has a doctorate in Social Anthropology, and a whole lot of other bits and pieces of degrees.

And your other daughter?

And then Alison, who we would have liked to have done medicine, because she's the most, shall we say, stable, steady, and just ideal person to have done medicine, but she's a little laid back. She, she took a university degree, but is a social worker. But she cut that by, she took a B.A. in Exeter, and would have had to do a year for a Certificate in Social Work, but got away with that because she had helped out with the mentally handicapped, as the two other daughters did, Verity did as well, with my mentally handicapped. These girls volunteered to go and do their, wash their hair, and do all that sort of work.

Did the birth of the children create any financial difficulties for you?

No. No. Except in planning for their future. I, and looking back, I over-insured myself. I never thought I'd live to be much older than about 52, and had all my insurances of various sorts geared to this. I always thought, the way I lived, I'd have a coronary or something. Indeed, I did all my committee work early on, with this in mind, and did these jobs like Southern Electricity and, to be quite honest about it, the business of sitting on Medical Boards, starting very early on in the late fifties, in case I became chairbound and couldn't carry on in general practice.

How long did you have this feeling that you, you weren't destined to live ...

Well, from, from living day to day in the Army, at times, mark you, a lot of it was just sheer boredom. But, no, I'm just planning ahead. You see, they were in a, this Convent here was a private school, so with, through *The Practitioner*, or something like that I, I remember having them insured for their fees, and my wife to have a certain hundred a year, so they would carry on until they were 17, or whatever. That sort of thing.

Did you encourage them all to go into medicine?

Not a bit. No. Mary wanted to anyway, and had to go to the school in Oxford to get enough science to, to get her first M.B. And no, not a bit. Verity would never have done it. And Alison, she was much more easy-going, and no, she would never have done.

How did working in general practice affect family life?

Disrupted it entirely. And, but, you know, they all adapted. But the one great thing was, the girls were at a local school. I was normally home, if I could, at lunch time, however brief. I saw them, very often, through the day. And then we made a great point, very often, of not going

abroad so we could have family holidays with grandparents, or as I say, in our own set-up in Cornwall, with family friends as well. We, you know, we took people with us.

Finally, can you tell me what have been the biggest changes in general practice that have taken place during your career?

Yes, well, I, my career ended in general practice in '77, and I think the bigger, the biggest changes in general practice were the great advances in all these protective vaccines and everything else - whooping cough - well, oh, and before that, diphtheria, of course, and the rest of it. And the dying out of scarlet fever. These were the things that made the difference in general practice. And better, in this area, psychiatric help. I think that has fallen away very badly, but I'm only talking of up till '77, to be fair. The changes since, and I, I see a lot, as a friend of our own GP, who is just round the corner, in what would, had been in the old days, a rival practice, and never was, all this lap of, you know, all these computers and stuff. God! Thank God I'm out of that! (LAUGHS)

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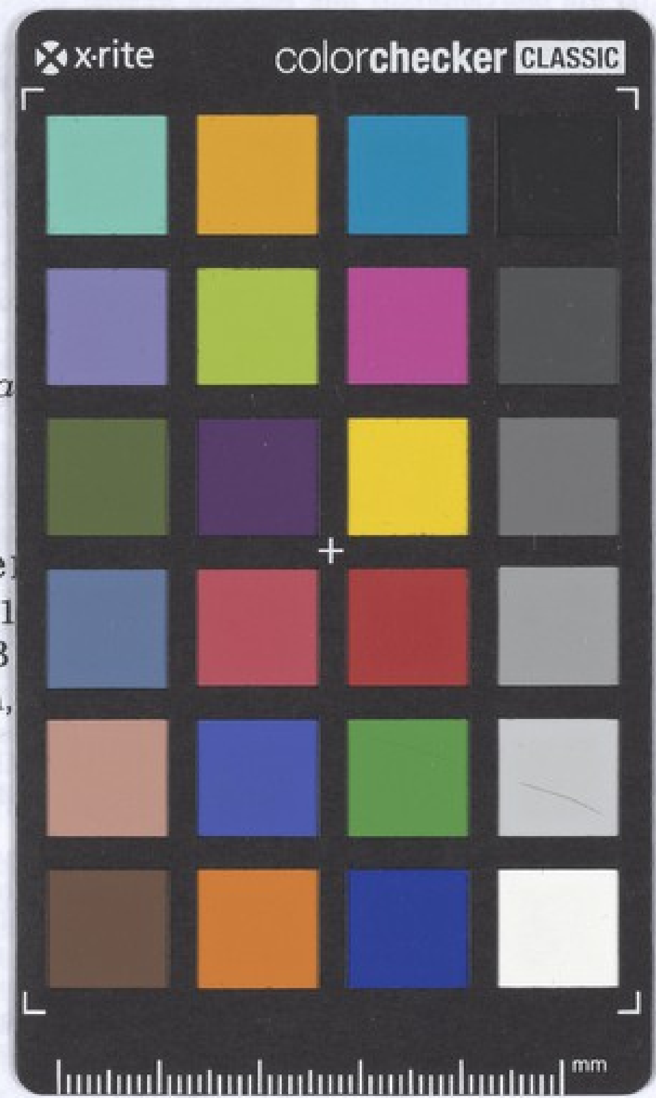

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Dr M.J. Bevan