



About the project

Langholm Made sought to explore and celebrate ‘making’ past and present in Langholm — a town with a rich textile history that remains vibrant in craft and making today. For Langholm Made, artist and filmmaker Emma Dove collected stories and memories of the weaving industry, whilst maker Deirdre Nelson explored ‘making’ in Langholm in its widest sense.

Making Connections

Langholm Made formed part of a wider project entitled Making Connections, initiated by Upland with local partner organisations, The Langholm Initiative and OutPost Arts, to enable artists and makers to explore and highlight Langholm’s rich history and heritage in textile manufacture. Making Connections consisted of two artist residencies, undertaken by Dumfries & Galloway based artist Emma Dove and Glasgow based maker Deirdre Nelson, and a schools project led by Kirkcudbright-based textile artist Morag Macpherson.

About these booklets

For Langholm Made, Emma Dove recorded conversations with a number of local people who contributed stories and memories relating to the textile heritage of Langholm. This booklet is one of a set of seven, each containing a printed conversation transcript, existing as a way to capture and share the personal reflections and memories which celebrate a unique heritage, deeply embedded in people and place.

About the text

The conversations in these booklets have been transcribed using the ‘clean transcript’ standard, whereby ‘fillers’ (such as ‘um’) and repetitions are mostly edited out so as not to distract from the main content. However an effort has been made to try and keep as much of the natural flow of conversation as possible within the text. Any spelling or formatting relating to dialect has been transcribed as true to the spoken word as possible. Use of dialect words vary throughout each conversation (so for example the word ‘you’ might be spelled ‘you’, ‘ee’ or ‘yow’ at different points within one transcript). Spelling and formatting choices have been made at the discretion of the transcriber in each instance.

The start and end of some transcripts — as well as some short sections within the conversations — have been edited out when considered to be informal pre-amble, post-amble, or an unrelated tangent to the main conversation. In a very small number of instances, a word, phrase or sentence has also been retracted from a transcript if considered that it could cause unnecessary offence.

Glossary of Langholm dialect

a — I	ken — know	deef — deaf	faither / fither — father
mie — me	ee ken — you know	auld — old	freen — friend
ee / yow — you	ken't — knew	cald — cold	mucker — pal
hie — he	tell't — told	sair — sore	fook — folk
oor — our	ca' / caw — call	deid — dead	weemin — women
yir — your	ca'd / cawd — called	yince — once	booyee — boy
oo — we / us	ta'en — taken	ony — any	lassie — girl
ain — own	siee — see	nane — none	naebody — nobody
whee — who	gie — give	maest — most	thegither — together
yin — one	git — get	mair — more	maitter — matter
twee — two	mind / min' — remember	aw / a' — all	toon — town
thrice — three	cairry — carry	ae — always	heed — head
fower — four	hing — hang	wie — wee	hair — heart
twal — twelve	scoorin' — scouring	sic — such	han' — hand
hunners — hundreds	skelped — hit	stert — start	mooth — mouth
thoosand — thousand	dae / div — do	afore / afoor — before	moothfa — mouthful
nae — no	dae ken — don't know	after — after	soon — sound
aye — yes	dinna / daen't / divn't — don't	doon — done	threid — thread
an — and	didnae — didn't	lang — long	yairn — yarn
o' — of	disn't — doesn't	a'hint — behind	patren — pattern
eet — it	canna — can't	ower — over	coorse — coarse
tae / 'ae / 'a — to	couldnae — couldn't	wi' — with	claiths — clothes
fra — from	wid — would	forra — forward	dookie — swimsuit
fir — for	widnae — wouldn't	throw — through	caird — card
joost / jist — just	wouldae — would have	roon — round	barra — wheelbarrow
dae — do	wasnae / wan — wasn't	fer — far	reid — red
daein / dain — doing	werena — weren't	aff — off	cairt — cart
ga — go	wunna — won't	oot — out	pert — part
gan — go / going	hadnae — hadn't	doon — down	wa' — wall
hev — have	shaire — sure	affa — awfully / a lot	flair — floor
hed — had	wrang — wrong	oor — hour	hoose — house
teeke — take	feart — afraid	pun' — pound	tiee — tea
meeke — make	weel — well	mam — mum	breid — bread

Margaret Latimer & Sheila Barnfather

24 May 2021

SPEAKERS

*Margaret Latimer, Sheila Barnfather,
Judith Johnson, Emma Dove*

Emma
Dove

So, just first of all, I'm just wondering whether each of you actually grew up in Langholm, and also if you did, then what your childhood memories of the town were?

Margaret
Latimer

Well, I grew up in Langholm, born and bred. My childhood memories of the Muckle Toon were playing in the park, playing along the dam side, playing doon the skinyards, and that school — primary school — infant school, primary school, secondary school, youth club. And then, well, into the mill efter that. I actually wanted tae be a hairdresser, but me mother said 'No, you're not being a hairdresser, get yer'sel in the mill and get some money earned.' And that was the way it was, it was all style and that was it. And I mean, I loved it. I didn't think I would like it, but I did. I loved it — 'cause I liked sewing and I think that was half the battle, because I could use scissors an a needle and what have ee. And no, I liked it very mu— in fact I loved the job. That's where I met Sheila —

Sheila
Barnfather

Mmhmm.

ML

— when a join't to Neill's Mill, 'cause Sheila was there, she'd been the — [in quieter voice] She's a wee bit aulder...

SB [laughs] Just a wee bit. Just a wee bit.

ML She was there just before us and we've been pals ever since, haven't we? And that was 1965.

ED Right, and did you grow up in Langholm as well Sheila?

SB No, a grew up in Eaglesfield. D'you ken where Eaglesfield is?

ED Ah okay, I just passed through it on the way, yeah.

SB Oh have ye? Aye, it's different now an aw though, ken, every bit changes isn't it? And it was just — there was two girls fra Waterbeck, and they must have went to the Ford Mill to see if they could get a job — obviously ee wanted money, when you left the school ee needed the money. And they said that if they could get a few maybe thegither, they would put a van on and gan pick aw up. So my cousin and I at Eaglesfield, we came and we got an interview, but a went tae Neill's — Neill's Mill — and she went tae the Ford. But there was aboot six of us in the van to begin wi'. But my cousin and I used to have to bike fra Eaglesfield to Waterbeck every morning and night — can ee imagine that now?

ML Was that tae get the bus?

SB To get the van — the van only went to Waterbeck, 'cause them lassies had wanted it. So — and then we'd been there for a few month an a think — the man that was driving it was Bob Reid — an a think he sometimes used to get fed up waitin' on us. But I mean we werenae meanin'a be late, but they were big hills to climb — we'd tae walk up some o' the hills wi' the bike. And so they decided — the boss o' the Ford Mill decided he would just sen' the van doon 'a Eaglesfield. So it was gran' efter that. But no, it was — it was good. As ee say, ee wanted the money.

ML Aye, exactly aye.

SB Three pound a got — three pound ten shilling was ma first wage — had to work five days for that! [laughs]

ML And ee ken, strangely enough ee could save off that — maybe it was only 10 bob.

SB I know, uhuh, aye.

ML But ee ken, ee could save aff it. Aye, it was great.

ED And so what sort of — did you get

ED cont. training when you first started the job?
Can you describe that?

ML We'd tae sit for 18 months training —
Greta Grieve, wasn't it?

SB Aye, well I had to gan 'a — I had to gan
and sit a test at Galashiels at the College.

ML Yeah, efter your training?

SB Yes, did you's — did you gan for it, aye?

ML Yes, Al Stilley, Mr. Stilley at Gala. You got
trained wi' this woman in Langholm,
and... It was your neighbour wasn't she?

SB Mmhmm.

ML And then ee had to gan — after 18 month,
ee'd tae gan up to Galashiels to sit a test.

ED Right okay, so it didn't matter where
you were working — everyone went to
Galashiels to do their —?

SB Aye.

ML Aye — no, the Ford didna.

SB Did they no?

ML No, a dae think the Fo—

SB Did they never pass a test then?

ML Nuh, a dae think they did, nuh.

SB Oh we musta been posh at Neill's Mill...

ML [laughs] But Reid & Taylor's and Waverley
and us went, but I don't think the Ford
went. Something rings a bell that they
didnae gan.

SB Mibbe no, but we had tae gan anyway.
And yince you were passed yir test —

ML And if ee failed, ee'd to gan back in
another three months time and sit again.
Whatever — whatever thing you failed
in, 'cause there was like what they caw'd
picking, and darning, and — what was
the other thing, Sheila? Oh ee'd to make —
well there was a hole cut in the cloth and
ee'd to fill the hole in wi' your different
coloured threads, warp and weft threads,
and depending what yin you failed in, ee
hed tae go back three months later and sit
eet a' over again. If you failed everything,
ee'd tae gan back and sit the whole lot
again.

SB Mmhmm.

ED Wow.

ML But it disnae dae that —

SB Was nerve-wrackin' gan'a sit a test, like, wasn't it?

ML A ken, aye — we'd tae gan a' the way 'a Gala, to this — as Sheila said — the Technical College at Gala. And we were there — was a couple o' days?

SB Aye, a couple o' days, we were.

ML And ee'd had to dae this test.

ED And then after that, then did you take on a slightly different role then?

SB No you were just daein exactly the same thing. But you made yir — you made yir own wage. So the harder you worked, the more money you got, wasn't it Mags?

ML Aye. But they'd to wait till they actually told that ee had passed. Ee got a wee bit o', kinda... What's the word I'm looking fir? Promotion, shall we say — from actually training as your apprenticeship, till ee actually got told that ee'd passed. So ee got a wie bit — kinda wie bit lift up, and then of coorse when ee got word to say ee'd passed, then that was when ee were told ee were a fully qualified darner. But, having said that, you were always learnin', because there was always new cloths came oot.

SB Aye, a' the cloths werenae the same obviously, ken.

ML No, nuh. They were a' different. 'Cause it just used to be worsted, and then of course they introduced fancy silks in an... And as I say, you were always training, because there was always new cloths appeared.

ED And so, do you remember, like before you started working in the mill, did you have a sort of idea of what it was gonna be like?

SB No, nuh, no. I had no idea —

ML Well a hed a wee bit of an idea.

SB — 'cause I wasnae even in Lang— ken, I wasnae even in Langholm.

ML Aye. But a hed, 'cause me mother went back to — efter me dad passed, me mother went to the mill to work. So a kinda ken't what eet was like, ee ken.

SB When a first went in for the — ken when you went 'a the interview and they were showin' you roon — oh and the smell!

ML The smell, aye.

SB Jist greasy, oily tweed, ken. It was right greasy smell, wasn't it? 'Cause obviously

SB cont. it got aw washed an that. And it was a right oily smell, an a thought 'oh — god I'll never stand this smell', it fair — wuh — fair went fir us. But you got used to it, didn't you?

ML You got used til it, aye.

SB But when you went hame at night, I mean your mum would say 'Oh, a can fair smell that' — off your jumper an that, ee ken.

ML Smell the grease off ee, aye.

SB But ee got used to it, ken.

ML Mmhmm, absolutely. Oh aye... It was good for your hands, kept your hands soft — the grease in the cloth.

SB Aye, aw the grease in them.

ED Yeah, that's the sort of thing that doesn't come through in pictures is — like what things smelled like, or you know, the sounds as well, is something that I wonder about a lot —

SB And ee used to have to rub your hands across the cloth for knots. Ken, obviously gettin' — for the wee knots that ee had to lift up. And ee had — that's when your hands got right fair smooth, 'cause they were fair greasy. But your thumb used to fair shine didn't it?

ML Aye.

SB And in later years wi' — ken just rubbin' them and rubbin' — sometimes they used to bleed and they were sair, weren't they?

ML Bleed, mmhmm.

ED Really?

SB It was tough.

ML Depended what kind of thickness the cloth was, and depended on how many faults, ee ken, and knots and that was in eet. And — 'Oh! Ooft...' — an ee wid look — 'Oh god that's it cut into the —'

SB I mean probably when we first start, it would be aw much the same style o' cloth, wasn't it? And then, as you say, things disnae sell and that, and then they wanted different things, and ee got like lady's tweed thing and that, wasn't it? So you had sort o' boucle kind o' stuff in it, and that was different an aw. But, years and years ago it would just be much aw the same tweed, ken, that they wove and wove and wove.

ML Aye, XT's and WD's.

SB Suitings, like.

ML	Worsted.		her arse is for her new stool!' [laughter]
SB	And then suitin' sort o' went — suits went oot o' fashion, didn't they?		Well, ee needed a comfy stool, didn't ee? Ee needed yin that fitted yir behind! So you always got yir new stool. Ay dear...
ML	They did, aye. But when a first started — and I would imagine you would be the same, Sheila — for a good week and more, we actually just done it on, em... What'dya call yon white, like little hessian—?	ED	[laughs] So can you describe the role, like the typical things that you would do day to day?
		ML	In the mill, like?
SB	Oh, aye. It's like what you would dae tapestry on now, ken.	ED	Yeah, in your jobs, yeah.
ML	Tapestry, that was what we trained on first.	ML	Well they would clock in for ee to start at eight o' clock... Gan 'a yir table... Hing ower somebody else's table and talk tae them for twee or thriee minutes til they were actually sayin' 'Hey, eight o' clock startin' time, move!'
SB	Hessian stuff.		
ML	Yes, aye. An ee done a warp, and then ee done in your weft, and you were — ee ken, it was different colours so that you could see whether ee'd spliced the back or not.	SB	[laughs] Well ee had to get a' the news o' the night before, hadn't ye?
SB	Aye ee used to learn on them wee bitsa cloth first, afore the —	ML	Absolutely — especially on a Monday mornin' — fantastic on a Monday mornin'. Because we would say 'cheerio' tae them, ee ken, on a Friday night. Sometimes Sheila stayed wi' mie for the weekends, but other times, ee ken, if Sheila was gan ower tae Eaglesfield or whatever, and — 'Right, what was gan on ower the weekend?'
ML	Aye, used to learn. And then of coorse, Sporty Borthwicks — ee ken Sporty Borthwicks? — they used to come in periodically when there was a new person started in the darning flat — 'So we've come'a measure her arse to siece how big	SB	Aye, you had to get aw the news an —

ML	Oh ee'd tae get aw the news.	SB	'She was oot on Friday night, where did she get that frock?' Ee ken... [laughs]
SB	Whee had been wi' whee, an... [laughs] whee wis drunk and whee wisnae.		Aw dear, she wid borrow the dress off somebody.
ML	Aye, oh aye — 'What did hie kiss like? Was hie good?' — ee ken? [laughter] Aw dear, I know, it was great.	ML	Aye, because Smith's didnae have a great deal o' up to the — ken, fashion. So ee'd tae gan on the bus to Cairel — Carlisle, sorry, Carlisle — and it was Eve Browns, wasn't eet? Browns at the time, which used to dae the grandest selection o' shift dresses.
SB	Different days. They'll no bother now how they kiss, will they?		
ML	Nuh, nuh... 'Was she wi' him?!' — 'Aye' — 'Yir jokin', what on earth did she siee in him?!' [laughter]	SB	[laughs]
SB	Ee certainly got aw the news anyway, ee didnae lack fir the news. Ee didnae need the Langholm paper did ee?	ML	Ee ken, ee wid hev that on on the Seturday night if ee were at the dance — well there was jist always a dance in the Buccleuch Centre, it was great.
ML	Nuh, ee did not. And then ee ken ee wid maybe hear somebody was expecting, 'Oh god — was she pregnant afore she got merried?' Ken, that's what it was like, ee ken.	Judith Johnson	Or the Buccleuch Hall, as it was then.
ED	Sounds just like the play that Judith directed...	ML	The Buccleuch Hall sorry, not the Buccleuch Cen— aye well it is the Buccleuch Centre now, aye. Buccleuch Hall, aye that's where we went. Or the youth club, the youth club was good... Hingin' roon the jukebox.
ML	Aye, that's just what it was like and then you'd hing — ee'd kinda dae a bit of your thing ower your table — 'Hey, what was she daein the other night? Look at her, she's gey quiet, is she awright?'	ED	So you couldnae keep a secret really?
		ML	Oh no, no — no for long.

SB	Ee wid try, but ee couldnae.		van, ee ken, gan away hame wi' aw the curlers in. Musta been curly, mine, 'cause I mean, ken, it was — they were in frae dinner time.
ML	Nuh. Not if ee were close to a'budy. Ee ken — the likes o' Sheila an I were very close and we used to just, ee ken, 'Look at her...' ee ken. [laughter] Some fook would say it was quite catty, but it wasnae.	ML	Aye, mmhmm.
SB	No, nuh.	SB	Oh dear...
ML	It was, ken, it was clean, good fun. We werenae being nasty, we were just being in an environment what happens in a derning flat. Just pure and simply. Friday was ae a great day because if ee were going oot on the Friday night, you would come in wi' the rollers in, and the heid scarf, ee ken — sometimes you done yours in the toilet, didn't you?	ED	So when did you move through then, Sheila?
SB	Aye, a used to wash it at dinner time in the toilet — well not in the toilet! But in, ee ken, in the —	SB	When did a move here? I just moved here when I got married, aye.
ML	In the ladies toilets, aye.	ED	Ok, so you were commuting through —
SB	— where the toilet is, wash it in the wee sink. Get the rollers in and then ee used to have the head square, ee ken, tied roon here. And then, of course I mean I was travelling in the van at the time — well you yins'd be the same, you'd have to walk hame wi' your curlers in — and I used to sit copped up in the front o' this	ML	50 years ago!
		SB	50 years ago, aye. 50 years. So I just came here when I got married. I stayed at Mags a lot, next door wasn't it? Stayed there a lot, and... Oh, nuh, we had some good times. I stayed before you flitted through there wi' your mam though?
		ML	Oh aye, ee were at Parliament an aw.
		SB	At Parliament, aye. We used to get the drink...
		ML	Oh aye, we used to raid the cupboard.

SB Mind we used to get the gin an orange, and mind we had paper cups — they werenae them nice plastic yins, they were jist paper cups — and you brought them up the stair, didn't you? And we're gettin' a' ready'a gan oot, ee ken, and here's oor gin an orange sittin', and it seeped through the bloody thing!

ML [laughing]

SB And it was on yir mother's dressing table, wasn't it? Aw, gad...

ML Lickin' it off the dressing table — we didna waste eet! Aw dear...

SB [mobile phone rings] Somebody fra Bedford, but a dinna ken them.

ED So... In terms of the actual job itself, was there much that was different? Like from — you said your mum worked in the mill as well — was there anything that was different from generations before? Or was the job itself much the same?

SB I think the job would be much the same.

ML Aye, 'cause the dernin's aw the same regardless what ee dae, I mean —

SB And like when we started it was like suiting tweeds, wasn't it, really? So that

would be what the mills start wi'. And then it was just in later years when the —

ML Aw the fancy stuff, aye.

SB Aw the fancy — you got the young fancy designers coming in and, ken, making the patterns and that, and it was wi' different cloth wasn't it? Wasna always aw nice, mind, but I mean it was work, soo ee just — they just had to take it, ken. Ken ee wid get some jackets an that and they're fair — ladies check boucle things.

ML Mmhmm, which is a' fashion now, that great big dog tooth check, I mean, we used to dae that years ago. But that was what we caw'd — what Sheila and I are saying are new stuff now, ee ken, ee never used to dae that when we first started.

SB It's like anything else, if you want to make the money ee'd just got to keep changing, haven't you, ken? You had to change that wee bit.

JJ And were you at different mills throughout your time that you were working, or did you stay at the same place?

ML Stayed at the same yin.

SB Stayed at the same yin. How long were

SB cont.	you there Mag?	ML	Yes, aye, mmhmm. Because there wisna — I dinna think there was ever the same quality in them as what there was in the ordinary suitings and that, the worsteds. I think, people the likes o' oor'sels put mare in til it, as what ee did — because ee ken, they would say 'Oh, just stick it to taste.' And that just wasnae the way ee were trained — 'stick it to taste' — ee were trained to dae eet properly.
ML	Well I sterted, then I finished when I was expecting the twins. And then I went back efter Hugh and I split up. So I was off for about 14 years, and I would be there right til — well, til the mill finished, and then I'd tae gan'a Carlisle efter that. So, ee may as well say I was there aw me days as weel, really. But I'll tell ee I did find a difference when — efter I was away fra aboot 14 years, and a went ba— I went back to Bell's actually. Well Bell's offered us a job for six weeks, which a hed to teeke 'cause a needed the money. And then Hector Barnfather got in touch wi' us to sие if I wanted a permanent job at Neill's — a said 'Well a wouldnae mind.' So a went back to Neill's, and when I went back, obviously I was back beside Sheila — and what a difference in the fabrics as what it was, ee ken, when I first sterted. It moved on fra just your ordinary worsted and what not, to, as Sheila was saying, the great big fancy stuff. Completely changed.	SB	It ended up that it was mare, like, quantity as quality, wasn't it, ken?
		ML	Exactly, exactly.
		SB	Like as long as they got them oot, ee ken — 'Get them oot as quick as ee can, we need the money back in' — an, just like everything else in life, it just changes, but —
		ML	A was there 34 years.
		ED	So you didn't have to, you didn't spend as much kind of time working on those fabrics? Or was it more challenging for you to work on?
SB	I didna like some o' the fancy stuff.		
ML	No, neither did I.		
SB	Like I'd raither have had the — just the suitings and that, ken, that's what you learnt to work wi' an that, and it was better.	SB	No, it was a challenge daein them, but ee just had to get on wi' it like. We coped, we coped nae bather. But we did like the tweed like better, really.

ML Can ee remember what ee caw'd yon... Ah, canna mind, for — was it for Dunhill? The smoking... yon black stuff? Oh [sighs], the great big coats — what did they caw them again? You were there when we were daein them on yon fancy machines and you just had to rip the threids oot. Can ye no min'?

SB ...Nah.

ML They were black, an they made gents coats wi' them. Great big thick — Dun... Am sure it was Dunhill. What do you caw that big shop in Carlisle — dae ken whether it's still there or no — they used to sell them. They were very expensive, 'cause they were pure mohair.

SB Aye, they were. I ken what kind of coats you're meaning.

ML An a canna min' the name o' them Sheila? But for —

JJ Burberry?

ML No, nuh. But for the type o' thing that it was, and the amount that it was costing to buy yin, you've no idea what the work was like — we just — 'Oh, just rip the knots oot. Just rip them, just rip the threads oot. Dinna worry if they get —' well the way they got finished, they were

actually just milled and milled and more milled, so they were just — ee couldnae sice there was anyth— ee couldna tell it was a bit o' tweed.

SB No they were quite hairy when they were finished, weren't they?

ML Aye, mmhmm.

JJ So was it like a felted...?

ML Yes, that's how it kinda looked like when it was finished Judith, aye. I wish I could min' the name of it... Probably will when I can min' — throw the night, I'll phone ee and tell ee. [laughter] Pass the message on.

SB But we were lucky min', 'cause we had a good boss, ken. Kenneth Neill was a real — hie was an all in man — and then his son, can you mind o' Bill Johnstone?

JJ Mmhmm.

SB Well, he took ower like, an a mean he was really good wasn't he? Him an Alec Graham, they were good bosses.

ML Aye, and that's when the different fabrics and silks and that came in wi' —

SB Aye, 'cause Bill got younger designers in ee ken, to design the sorta little patrens,

SB cont. and they went in for aw that. But they were good bosses like, weren't they? It was a good bit tae work.

ED Mmm, and did that make a real difference then, like I guess — was there much overlap in terms of chatting between people who worked in different mills and talking about the different bosses and, you know, where was good to work for, and where wasn't?

ML Oh, you got that.

SB Aye you got that, aye, uhuh.

ML Because you would hear 'Oh, well —' ee ken, 'Neill's Mill, they must —' ee ken, 'they're good bosses'. Whereas across the street in Reid & Taylor's... what was it ee ca'd him? The head o' Reid & Taylor's to begin wi'...

JJ John Packer?

ML Before that, Judith. But they reckoned hie —

SB Ronnie Howard, no?

ML In that era, aye — it was actually — hie was actually Ronnie Howard's boss... Oh dear, cannae mind what ee caw'd him either. Isn't that terrible? But they reckoned hie

was a right old deal, hie wasnae a very nice man at aw.

SB But everybody — well even now when you're talking to them like — everybody that worked at Neill's like, I mean, ken, as you say, we aw got fed up working an that sometimes, but I mean, everybody'll say 'Aw, what a grand bit eet was.' Ken, Billy Graham and them — 'aw, fair good, good — good place tae work'. It was, like, wasn't it?

ML It was, aye.

SB And the bosses were nice tae ye, I think that kinda helped an aw —

ML That made a difference.

SB Ee ken the — like Bill appreciated what ee'd done didn't hie?

ML Absolutely, mmhmm.

SB Ken ee werenae just a — well, we were a number, really, but ee didnae feel as if you were just a number, 'cause he wis, ken — they were nice tae ye an that an aw, weren't they?

ML He used tae come roon every Monday mornin', didn't hie? Every Monday mornin'a siece if ee were — how ee felt,

ML cont. how ee were daein, were ee okay, d'you have a nice weekend — just, ken, general chitchat. We were aw still kinda half mazled ee ken —

SB [laughs] 'Did ee get fixed up?'

ML Did ee get fixed up [laughs] — and hie was keen 'a ken what we'd been up to, ee ken, he was...

SB I'd never seen him for years until I worked in The Hope, ken. And Alec Carruthers was in, and hie used to come in — like Shona — Martin Borthwick's Shona — her dad — and he was in, and Bill came in every week to siew him, ken. And hie was — oh, hie was just like coming in'a Neill's Mill like, ee ken, he was just that nice, and never forgot folk, ee ken, it's nice... Oh we'd some grand laughs like, didn't we? Especially when you're gettin' near the Common Riding.

ML Oh aye.

SB 'Cause you were getting excited for the Common — have you been'a the Common Riding?

ED No...

SB Ah, ee dae ken what you're getting excited for! But we div, we get excited — you div, so...

ML Ee'd have a right binge, ee ken, the night before — the Tuesday night dance. And we still worked the Common Riding week — well latterly they didnae work the Common Riding week, but we did. And on the Wednesday morning the first stop was Little's Bakers for hot pies — now imagine? Hot greasy pies.

SB Mmhmm, efter a night oot.

ML But do you know — they were the thing that cured you like that, fra yir — ee ken, the night before.

SB [laughs] The grease used tae run down your han'... Dennis Little used tae bring them doon'ae the mill, didn't he? Used to phone up and order them — just oot o' the oven, doon'ae the mill. The grease was runnin' doon — oh, they were good.

ML Put a lining back on your stomach.

ED So this was the morning after the Common Riding?

ML This was the morning after the Tuesday night dance.

SB Well the Tuesday night used tae be the big dance, didn't it? It was a big night, the Tuesday night.

ML Yes, aye.

SB But you always had to work on the Wednesday, so...

JJ And didn't the Cornet always come round — was that in Common Riding week, or was it the week before? He'd come round all the mills.

SB No he used tae come round the Common Riding week, didn't he? Hie used to come round actually on the summer fair day, because we worked tae the summer fair day then.

ML Yes, we worked then. Mmhmm, we did.

SB And then — a good few year ago — they stopped, and they had the Common Riding week off — that was like a week's holiday. So ee had to stay up gan'a bits on the Friday before — Thursday, Friday before — but no, ee'd come in on the Thursday, wasn't it? Fair exciting.

ED So tell — well, I don't know what that means... Tell me what that means!

SB [laughs] Well just that, the fella that's the Cornet — him and his right and left hand men — they used tae gan roon aw the mills. But I think they would get money?

ML They did, aye.

SB Like, no them personally — the Common Riding got money.

ML The Common Riding, 'cause they brought the box in, didn't they?

SB Aye, they used to bring the Cor— what they ca'd the Cornet's box, and I think the bosses fra the mill and the shopkeepers an that wid aw put something in. I think that was like — well they done that until yin year when the Cornet tell't them that hie didnae get the money. So I dae think they —

ML They got drink an aw, ee ken.

JJ I think in later years, they've always had gifts — maybe a bolt of cloth or Border Fine Arts figurine, or, you know, something like that.

SB Aye, I think they got mare gifts like, because — well I dae ken when they stopped. A dae 'hink they dae the box now, div they?

ML Reid & Taylor's used to make them their — gie them the breeches stuff, didn't — for their breeches.

SB Aye, they got their check troosers off Reid & Taylor's. That was ae a gift for that. But... oh no, it was exciting when the Cornet came roon, ken. You'll have a Cornet at Dumfries an that though?

ED I know...

SB Or have ee no gan ae that either?

ED Well, no —

SB No, well it's either something that you're intae or you're no intae.

ED Well I only moved down to the area five years ago. So, I'm originally from up north, so...

SB Aye, oh well, you've no had much time. Well, you'll have to come to the first Common Riding and Judith'll show you a' what it's about.

JJ Better felt than tell't.

SB Aye.

ML Aye.

ED [laughs] ...So you mentioned earlier about your hands and what, you know, different cloths kind of did to your hands. And I was wondering if you could just describe

the tools, the main tools that you used for darning?

ML Needle, and a thimble, and a set of scissors — all in one hand. An ee hed to practice to hold the needle correct, jist to hold it like that. There was a certain way that ee'd to hold the needle.

SB Your thimble on that middle finger there, ee put the thimble on there, and then ee just had — it was like a long needle, there, and ee just had to stitch it along like that. And then in later years, we made a bit o' cloth — didn't we Mag? — in later years, instead o' the thimble. Put it on there, mmhmm.

ML So that was the tip o' your needle and it used tae go in like that. Yir thimble —

SB Your wee thread would be on the end, and then ee just pulled it through.

ML An your scissors on your pinky. So everything was in the one hand. Ee'd tae sit... like that.

SB A dae ken if I could work wi' my pair o' scissors in there now.

ML A div a' the time.

SB Oh div ee?

ML Mmhmm, aye.

SB And then ee used to have like — it was like, just tweezers, but we used to ca' them — what did we ca' —

ML Mouters. Mouters.

SB Mouters, didn't it. But it was just like tweezers really. And that's what you used to pick the knot up wi' — you used to have to rub when you were pickin' it. And then aw the wee knots, you had to lift them up and get their two tails, 'cause they were — once it was washed it was cut off in the machine, the knots. So — and if you missed a knot you got a hole [laughs] — the machine cut a hole in it, didn't it?

ML Aye, and ee'd to sit and darn it, aye. You used to get a row for that, because we were meant to have picked it properly when it was in the greasy, before it went into the scouring hoose to get cleaned, and then oor boss Jimmy would use the cropper, and crop a' the ends off yir darns and yir knots, and if you left a knot in the fabric —

SB It just came into a wee hole.

ML It made a hole.

SB So you had to mend it.

ML Ee had to darn it. And ee used to whiles get a row, 'cause it was oor blame, 'cause we'd left it.

SB If there was ower many wie holes they used to say 'ah ee've no been paying attention!'

ML Which did happen, periodically.

SB That wis Hector's dad — Jimmy.

ED And it would come back to you?

SB Yeah, mmhmm, oh aye, 'cause your name's on the ticket — the whole way through your name's on the ticket, isn't it?

ML Aye, unfortunately, mmhmm...

SB So if there's any'hing it comes back wi' — they've got proof whee done it, so...

ML Whee done the piece, aye — because we didn't caw them lengths o' tweed, we ca'd them 'pieces'. And we didnae gan in yards and feet, we talked about 'ells' — sae many ells.

SB 66 ells.

ML 66 ells was a piece, mmhmm.

SB Was a heavy piece, that. But when we first

SB cont. started you got like a table — see Mag's table there — but it would be like tilted up, sloped table. And we used to have to pull it doon, dae aw that — hunt for the knots and that, or darn, whatever it were daein — and then ee kept pulling it doon. And then when you finished your 66 ells, it was quite a lot, wasn't it?

ML Quite a lot, aye.

SB Wrapped roon, and then ee had to gan and you had to pull it aw back. Then when you were finished you'd to get somebody else to help you — gie a shout for a — 'Geez a fold, Mag'. So we had to fold it up, roll it up, cairry it away.

ML Well ee had the face to dae, tae — both sides to dae.

SB Aye, but before we got — before we left they'd actually got —

ML Fancy tables.

SB Fancy big tables, they were huge like, weren't they? Ee couldnae siee yin another much. Couldnae really siee by them, you were just at this table. But you just pressed the button and it just brought it doon a wee bit, ee ken — it was mod cons, wasn't it? Efter us haulin' and lifting them fir years! But health and

safety would come in y'siee, so — they were too heavy for us to lift.

ML Yes, that's how it a' changed, it just completely changed, aye I know.

JJ When would that be about, what year?

ML Fift — Well a left —

SB Did you leave when it shut?

ML When it shut completely, aye.

SB Aye, a left just before that.

ML So I'd be 53 year auld, so that you're talkin', 17 years ago? Oh God, isn't that affa... 18 years ago. Aye, 'cause I went to Carlisle when I was 53. Aye, so it'll be 18 years ago. So we'd be daein that 18 years ago — we'd maybe dae it for a couple o' years? — wi' these fancy tables.

SB It was a lot better mind, dinna get us wrong. I mean ee just, ken, 'cause you could get a bigger area an aw when you were standin' daein it, but... you just pressed the button.

ML And ee had your own lights as well, because sometimes when you done your — finished your work — ee hed to pull it over tae a great big lighted table and

ML cont. gan over it again on the lights. Whereas these new tables, it had the lights for ee, and so everybody had their own — ‘cause sometimes you were waiting for somebody finishing, ‘cause there was only, what, a couple o’ tables what had lights on? Whereas we all hed oor ain lights — it was better that way certainly.

ED So it was like lit from the back?

ML Lit from underneath at the back, aye. It was sloped like that, it used to come ower the top.

SB ‘Cause we had to dae that, ‘cause sometimes there was like shots, ken, like a thread would be oot the whole way. Ee didnae always notice it, but you could notice it on the lights.

ML Aye, that was a missing thread, was a ‘shot’ — ca’d it a ‘shot’. Fancy names like, haven’t they?

JJ It’s a whole language really isn’t it?

ML It is a different language.

SB Well ‘mouters’, I mean really — to pick the knot up — I mean, I’ve still got mine in the hoose, I kept them and ma scissors, that was a’. But I mean they were just like kind o’ tweezers weren’t they, but ‘mouters’ —

a dae ken where they got that name fra.

ML Aye, but they’ve got pointy ends, aye — just got point ends.

ED Uhuh — I think Ann and Mags referred to them as ‘pickers’.

ML Now ee siece that would be Reid & Taylor’s, ‘cause she was Reid & Taylor’s, wasn’t she? An a’m shaire they ca’d them ‘pickers’ at Reid & Taylor — where we ca’d them ‘mouters’. So it — ken, everywhere musta had different names for them.

ED Yeah, even between two mills in the same town.

ML Mmhmm, in the same toon, aye.

ED That’s interesting. And so when you got those new tables as well — ‘cause I imagine it’s quite a physical job, like you’re always kind of bending and really kind of focusing really close — did it change how you actually did the job as well? ‘Cause you’re kind of different physically?

ML Ee actually were standin’ mair.

SB Aye, ee did, ee stood mair, really.

ML	Aye, ee stood mair. Aye, because obviously there wasna the same amount o' — because the looms had actually modernised, there werenae — ken, a lot o' the auld Dobcross looms had ceased to work and they'd got the new yins. So there wasnae the same faults in the tweed as there used — there was faults, dinnae get us wrong, but I mean, no like what there used to be. And of coorse yarns and everything had improved, and... you were actually standin' mair.			you had to mark it, and then you'd too — ken, well obviously the machine whirled it back — and then you could sit an darn it, but we didnae sit that much efter that.
		ML		No we didnae, nuh. No we didnae, so we got rid of oor darner's arse.
		SB		Aye! [laughter] That's what they used to say though, if they seen somebody wi' a great big bum: 'Oh! She must be a derner, she's got a derner's erse.' Ee ken, I mean that wis affa of us to say that wasn't it! [laughter]
SB	But when we start— I mean you went as a darner, so ee darned, didn't ee? 'Cause there was — there was, like, pickers, to pick the knots up, and there was markers, that — they would mark all the broken faults, they marked it wi' a thread. So I mean, we just used to get the piece, ken like the tweed, and just sit an —			
		ED		I'm glad we got that bit of history on record. [laughter] And did it put any other kind of strains on you, on your body, kind of physically, the job?
		SB		No, it kinna went for your eyes, didn't it? It was a strain on your eyes really min'? I never had glasses til I went to the mill.
ML	Darn eet.			
		ML		Well I was the same.
SB	Like when ee came 'a a red mark that was like, there was a thread missin' or something, or ends to sew in. And that — you just darned it. But it got that, it was like everything else — less and less workers — and we had to dae everything hadn't we? So that's when the electric tables, they came in. So it was much better, 'cause you were standing mair, 'cause you'd to stand an pick it, an then			But everybody's — a lot o' folk has glasses now anyway, but it was a strain probably ower the years, on your eyes, but there's nowt else really, is there?
		ML		But I mean, still enjoyed it — didna stop you fra, you ken, no enjoyin' it. No... I just wish sometimes I was 30, 40 years

ML cont. younger an there was still the mill there, so I could gan back and dern — ‘cause I liked it.

SB Aye, I was talking to Susan Scott yin day, I was talking to Susan you ken — and she wasnae a darner, but she worked at Neill’s — and she says ‘Oh couldn’t you just fair turn the clock back for a couple o’ years or something’, you ken. But things wouldna be the same, a ken, but... No as I say, everybody that worked there just seems to have fair liked it, ken.

ML There was bad days an a’ — it wasnae a’ just, ee ken —

SB Wisna a’ rosy like, was it?

ML No, it wisna a’ rosy.

ED Was it quite — was it changeable? Or was it fairly similar, like day to day? I know it changed over time.

SB Aye, no it was much the same really, just gradually changed, as I say, when the cloth and that changed ee ken, but everything else was much the same wasn’t it?

ML Aye. We’d the radio gan, the radio went the whole time — Radio Caroline, that was it, ken, got aw the pop music, it was great. And the length o’ the darning flat

— I mean they were quiet long like, and there was this, ee ken, a record that came on, and it was Jim Reeves ‘I Love You Because’ — you’ll no ken min’ o’ that, you maybe no can mind eet —

JJ I can.

ML Oh can ee? And that would come on, and ee would stand up and wave at the lassie away at the bottom of the room, ‘Oh, that’s a good yin!’ [laughter].

SB Oh ee did, didn’t ee...

JJ How many darners would there be?

SB Aw there was quite a lot to begin wi’ wasn’t there?

ML In its heyday there was a lot. Stertin’ at the bottom, there was — mind Nancy and Betty? Then the corner there was the twee Lindas. And then — ‘cause the tables were like, back to back — ee were like that. Is it that way? That way, aye. And twee of you sat thegither and then another twee. So there was the twee Lindas at the bottom, Linda Murphy and Linda Irving. Linda Nawrocki, that’s who it was. And then it was Brenda, wasn’t it, Brenda.

SB Aye and then Lynette Scott — worked there an aw, didn’t she?

ML And then Lynette and Elsie, and Linda Muir and Sheila Heugan.

SB Oh, there was a lot, like.

ML Shirley, and big Mo, and yow.

SB Aye, big Mo, big Mo was there. A got put aside big Mo...

ML Pat — Pat Malone, she was somewhere along there. Marian Murray... Margaret Graham, Margaret Little, Margaret Whillans.

SB Oh aye, she was there. And there was a few fra Copshaw there.

ML Aye, and there was Jeannie, Jeannie Murray.

SB Oh I know, there was a lot — there was a lot in the mills like years ago, you wonder how — well as I say there was about five buses came in every day, wasn't there? Big buses.

ML Aye, the lassies fra Penton, there was two or three lassies — Robina? There was quite a few — oh it was a big place like.

SB And it wasnae as big a mill as like Reid & Taylor's, there'd be fair mair workers at Reid & Taylor's.

ML Mmhmm. And the twee at the top — Annabel and... Well it was before Nessie, 'cause Nessie was a greasy derner wi' us for a while, afoor she went ont'a the clean. Whee was yon little — what did you caw her again? That worked wi' Annabel?

SB Oh, little Agnes.

ML Little Agnes, aye.

SB Noel Armstong's wife. Ken, Noel Armstrong, the chimney sweep, aye?

ML Aye, his wife, Agnes.

SB 'Cause she wis late in gettin merried wasn't she? She was kinna aulder. But there musta been loads working at the time — that was just in the darning flat, ee ken, like the darners bit — 'cause ee'd weavers an that an aw, but...

ED Can you describe the room itself, like sort of give me a virtual tour of your darning flat?

SB It was just yin great, big long room. It was wide — it was wide, but it was really long, ken. It would gan fra aboot where — well, afoor ee gan in'a the Co-op now, right to the waterside, wasn't it?

ML Aye, 'cause it was a Co-operative — what

ML cont. is the Co-operative now — that was Neill's Mill. And yin side was a' windas that looked up onto the Cemetery area.

SB And then they built the sewerage, so we got the smell...

ML The sewerage, aye... Twee great big doors — oh they were huge — that went throw into the steam loom shed, wasn't it? They were massive, and when they opened — oh, the noise, the looms, ee ken.

SB But it was just yin long bit like. Didn't you wonder how they heated bits like that though, ee ken? 'Cause I mean it would be a big area to heat an aw.

ED So those — so your darning flat then went into —

SB Went into the loom shed.

ML Aye, big — opened these massive doors, which would be — yin door would be the width of my living room, then you would have yir other yin. They just opened oot, ee ken, to bring the pieces in fra the loom shed into the dernin' flat, and they would sit on the bin waiting for us to gan and collect them, or for Jimmy to dish them oot — oor foreman to dish them oot.

ED And what did it sound like then, in there?

ML Clatter, clatter, clatter.

SB Och, noisy.

ML It was noisy, but ee got used til it.

SB You got used to it, but I couldn't have worked in it —

ML We hed tae gan throw there if we wanted to gan'a the toilet — if you needed a pee ee'd to gan throw there. 'Cause it wasna always that they opened the top door to let ee oot — good days yes, but winter days no, so ee'd to gan away throw the steam loom shed to gan'a the toilet.

SB But you would aw be sittin' workin' away, ken you'd be doin' — and then you would hear the noise o' the loom shed, and everybody looked up to see who was coming in [laughter] — you always knew when somebody was comin' in!

ML Aye, 'Here's the boss, heid doon.'

SB Aye, better keep gan.

ED And was there any like... My partner's dad used to work in Dundee in the textile industry, and I know there that they have certain words, like in the Dundee dialect, that have come out of the textile — of working in the factory floor, because

ED cont.	it's so loud, that it kind of changed the way that people actually spoke, like to communicate, you know. Was there any like, different ways of communicating in that noisy environment, like different words that you used or sort of symbols, sign language?	SB	Pity Colin hadnae 'cause he's deaf now, and he was in the loom shed. [laughs]
		ML	Aye. Well, that's what Lenny blames — Lenny Bell, o' why hie's deaf.
		SB	'Cause it was noisy, like. Ken when — well how many looms would be gan at a time?
ML	They used to communicate by gan 'hoooooh! — hoooooh!' from loom to loom, and then they would look up. 'Cause a dae ken how that would be. But I mean, they used to 'hoooh' at yin another.	ML	Oh god, there was loads.
		SB	God, they clattered on. And they were auld looms, they were noisy then.
SB	I couldn't have worked in the loom shed, like. I suppose you would get used to the noise, but I couldn't have worked in there.	ML	Aye, they were the auld Dobcross.
		SB	Ken, I mean they did get a bit better. Like everything else, ee get mair modernised.
ML	Because then, they didna wear earplugs. It's only — well latterly I think, they'd stert to wear earplugs, 'cause they never, ever did —	ML	Very, very seldom did ee gan throw an they were off — and it was eerie, when there was nae looms gan. But I mean it was very, very seldom that would happen.
SB	Just since a' this Health & Safety come in.	JJ	'Cause there would be evening shifts, was there?
ML	Mmhmm, there was nowt like that.		
SB	Div'ee think aw that would come in just wi' maybe folk sorta trying to get compensation an that? A lot, ken —	ML	There was. Aye there was shifts, aye.
		JJ	Did you work shifts or was it a normal working day?
ML	But folk never thought about compensation then, did they? Until, well until things progressed.	SB	No just normal, but we always — if there was any overtime, we worked. We were

SB cont. greedy — we liked the overtime, didn't we?

ML Couple oors at night Monday and Tuesday — sometimes you got a Wednesday, sometimes you got a Saturday morning.

SB Was gran' if you got a Saturday mornin' 'cause we got a bit extra for the Saturday.

ML Aye, and we used to get chips fra the chip shop — where the Vet is now, that used to be the chip shop — and the fellow that drove the van used to come roon for our order about quarter past fower, didn't he? — 'Are ee working the night?' — 'Aye' — 'Are ee wanting owt fra the chippy?' — 'Aye, a'll jist hev pie and chips.' So, you ken, that was it, and hie would have them for us for five o'clock, and we would have oor tea and then stert again at half-five to half-seven — couple oors overtime. And then, we used to smoke, didn't wait?

SB Aye, we did, aye...

ML We used to take off for fly fags, ee ken...

ED I was gonna ask how did you spend your breaks and your lunch breaks?

ML We only got 10 minutes in the morning. And then we used to get — 'cause we worked a five oor — we used to get, was

it 10 minutes, and then that stopped? Because ee used to get an hour — ee used to get half twal 'a half yin — and then that stopped and you got half an oor. A canna min' how... 'cause we were allowed to finish earlier on a Friday, wasn't it?

SB Aye, you got finished early on a Friday.

ML Aye, they wanted to finish early on a Friday so they change it aw, so that — they took away wi' some o' oor breaks and made oor lunch —

SB Well you used to get an hour at lunch time, didn't ee? And then we wanted just — well sometimes you were just hangin' about, ee ken?

ML So we finished at dinnertime on a Friday — well that was, we finished at dinnertime every Friday efter that, didn't we?

ED So would you stay in for your lunch? Would you just have —

ML Just stay there, aye.

SB Aye, mmhmm. Washed my hair, on a Friday. [laughs]

JJ Did you have a canteen?

ML No.

SB No, naw... If it was nice, we just used to gan oot the doors at the back and sit at the back — where the Co-op is now — just on a big bench there or something. Ee used tae gan through the boiler hoose and just sit ootside — if it was nice. But if no we'd just —

ML The big chimney, we used to sit roon the big chimney. Or on the waterside banking... 'Cause the ice cream man used tae come an aw — Pelosi's used to appear.

SB [laughing] The fish man used to come an aw!

ML Aye. [laughs]

SB Ee used to get the fish man on a Wednesday. Ee ken, a can hear his horn gan aboot the toon an I can never fin' where he stops. I used to like a bit o' fish off the van. And — fresh fish like, ee'd to cook it. But he used to stop at the mill and we aw went — well, ee went oot if ee needed the fish. Probably be stinkin' afore ee got hame, but never mind. [laughter]

ML Aye, Pelosi's used to come, and then Bill Johnstone stopped it — 'cause there was sic a queue this day — and Bill caught oo a', waiting for oor ice cream and hie stopped eet an that was it. And of coorse we were annoyed wi' Bill, we ca'd him a'

the bastards under the sun for daein that til us, ee ken!

SB But there again, if there was a big queue, and by the time you stood in the queue and got your ice cream and sat and ate your ice cream...

ML Mmhmm, you were losing money for them.

ED Mmm, d'you think... I mean, can you describe a bit about how the town has — how the mills shaped the town, I suppose, and then how that's changed over time?

ML Well, it used to be a right prosperous little toon. I mean, there was what, five mills? At least.

SB At least five, aye, and they were aw boomin' like, ken, busy.

ML Oh, god, aye. Buses used to come in fra a' places — Copshaw, Sheila came fra the Raw — Eaglesfield, and ken, they'd come fra a' ower.

SB But then, an I'm saying you'd be gan back a long time — but it was just your way, ken like if you were living in Langholm an that, you just — when you left school you just had to gan oot an make money. Whereas now they want to gan away to

SB cont. college and — well they dinna want'a come back now, div they really? Ken, they come back to visit but they're no... Ken, it's just got less and less and there's no much here now for them, is there? Which is a shame, but every bit'll be the same, it's no just Langholm, ee ken, lots of bits'll be like that.

ML But there's nowt for them to do, is there, in the toon? They've got tae gan out for work. Which is a shame really, because I mean, ee ken, that was Langholm's breid and butter really.

JJ And there was lots of different shops, wasn't there? Even when I moved here —

ML Oh aye, absolutely.

SB Mmhmm, and I mean the shops, like wi' a lot o' them in the mill, they would gan up the street at dinner time, an I mean it was helping the shops an aw — well I mean, they're losing aw that an aw. Well they've lost it, they're no losing it, they've lost it. But if you got — well, it wouldnae be very many folks that would get paid off — but if you were leavin' yin mill, ee got fed up, ee ken, you could get a job starting on the Monday at the next yin 'cause they were that busy an they were just — that was just the routine, wasn't it? We just never moved like, fra Neill's, but I mean a lot o'

folk did move roon about.

ML Right enough, mmhmm. I ken when I f— when Neill's Mill finished, and I remember sittin' thinkin', oh what on earth am I gan'a dae, I still need to keep workin', I'm only 53 year auld — only 53 year auld — I still need to hev a job. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would hae'a go 'a Carlisle for work — 'cause I thought, Langholm we were made, ee ken. That was it.

SB That was just it, like, you were in the mills til you retired.

ML Aye, exactly.

SB I mean I just left before tha—

ML Because your family had doon eet, an ee just thought well it's pairt and percel of life, we just carry on.

ED Did you manage to get a job in the same — in darning?

ML I went, yeah — I went to Pirelli's, I worked at Pirelli's. I worked at Kangols first — the seatbelts first — and then it went to China. I was there for seiven years, and I liked there, it was good. And then fra there I went to Pirelli's, which I hated 'cause it was 12 hour shifts — and I hated

ML cont. it. But it was aw there was an I mean I was — it was good money and I couldnae afford not to dae it. But you worked 12 hour shifts, four days on, four days off. And I think maybe because I was that much aulder as the rest o' them, ee ken. 'Cause I was the granny in the flat, like.

ED So there was younger — there was still younger folk working there?

ML Oh aye, mmhmm. But you ken Carlisle's just got kind o' much like Langholm, ee ken.

SB Every toon's the same an that, isn't it? Hawick's the same, ken there's... they'll no be near as busy.

ML Aye. But I liked at Kangols, I was there for a few years and as I say, it went — I'm saying China, it was Romania.

JJ And was that mending, at Kangols?

ML No it was seatbelts, making seatbelts.

JJ But what was your actual job?

ML Well a actually — well a went onto the quality control, when I went — purely because of what I'd done in the past, ee ken, the mending and that, and they thought well, she can dae something like

that, she'd be ok on quality control, which — well I musta been, because then I went to Romania a few times, to train them up in Romania. So I mean I must have been alright somewhere along the line.

SB [laughs] She must have done something right.

ML I musta done something right. [laughter] But, course, ee ken, folk are saying 'What did ee go'a Romania for, gee'in the Romanians a job' — I says 'Well', I says 'I was told to dae it so I hed to dae.' For by the fact I couldnae afford not to dae it, 'cause I was gettin' twee an a half times me wage, plus a bonus on top, so I mean, ee ken, it was a lot o' money to refuse. Which ee needed — well I needed 'cause a'd twee lassies to look efter. And then of course, as I say, it went to Romania, so I think 'well where am I gan'a gan now', an as luck hed eet, there was a thing for Pirelli's. So I took it, and, oh god... Thank goodness I was coming up to retiring age. I still had to suffer eet for six years, I think, six years I'd tae suffer eet.

SB But you just thought the mill was gan'a be — that was you, ken, that was your life in the mill, and you just thought that was it til ee retired. But then they just got less and less, and then shut the doors.

ML Aye, 'cause we never ken't anything else. We never knew owt else. 'Cause me mother — baith me mother and faither worked in Reid & Taylor's. And ee just thought, well, that's it, that's the way life is.

SB [mobile phone ringing] London now...

ML Mercy mie, yir global.

SB Popular, in't I?

ML Dear oh dear, Sheila.

SB Aw dear...

ED So you said you can go between — you could go between mills quite easily. Were there also rivalries between the mills?

ML Dinna think so...

SB A dae really think there was. I mean, ee ken, when we worked at Neill's, I mean we were aw the Neill's yins, and then Bell's was like Bell's — 'oh they work at Bell's' — Ronnie Hudson's wife used to work at Bell's and... a dae think there was a rivalry though, you ken, it was just they worked in yin bit an we worked in another, ee ken.

ML 'Cause she went fra Reid & Taylor's — Margaret Hudson — to Bell's, didn't she?

ED And what about town to town — like between Langholm, Carlisle, Langholm, Hawick — was there rivalries kind of town to town?

ML No I dinna think so. We never really bothered — ken when ee hed your job, that was it — you didna really bother wi' ony other toon, you just go on wi daein your — ken, in your ain kinda toon.

JJ And Hawick was more knitwear, wasn't it? Rather than weaving.

ML Knitwear it was, aye, it was more knitwear.

SB But I wouldna say there was any rivalry like, you didna... you didna sorta bicker because they were at yin bit and you were at another. You just — you were there at that mill and you just got on wi' it, made the maist o' it. Was awright when you got your wage at the end o' the week, wasn't it Mags?

ML Aye!

ED Did you have relatives that worked — I know that you mentioned you had relatives that worked in the mill before you, but do you remember any stories that they told about their time working in the mills?

ML Nuh... 'Cause I mean, I was just a wee lass when me dad worked across there, and — well, I was only nine when he died so I mean, I really didna ken very much what his, ken, what he got up to or whatever.

SB Nuh, a dinna either.

ML But, well mum, as I say, she went to Reid & Taylor's, but no I think she just — like we're saying, like, they just get on wi' it, ee ken. As we did. No a canna think... They like — they would have their darners dinners, the same as what we hed. They'd hev their social nights and what hev ee, but no...

ED Mmhmm. Can you describe then, the sort of different hierarchies in terms of the working — in terms of like different roles between men and women, or different ages, were there different hierarchies?

JJ Were there any women bosses, for example?

ML Oh aye.

SB Aye there was a lot o' women bosses, wasn't there?

ML Aye. Annabel, she was forewoman.

SB And then Nancy Barnfather.

ML And then Nancy Barnfather efter Ella, aye. But, ee ken, what ee caw her — Annabel was oor forewoman, Jimmy Barnfather was the foreman — but hie hed the upper hand really, didn't hie? Hie act— hierarchy. Hie was actually — or he maybe made his'sel that way a don't know... which he probably would have Sheila...

SB [laughing] I think he maybe did...

ML I think he maybe did. They were meant — I would think they were meant'a be on a par. But, Jimmy being Jimmy, was, ee ken...

SB Aye. Hie would be the man an, ken —

ML 'Cause ee ken, if ee had a problem wi' your piece, ee would shout 'Anna, come an hev a look at this' — 'Oh aye, just put a red threid doon the side, it'll get cut oot when it's finished.' Right, so ee'd put a reid threid doon the side, and that was to tell them that when it went into the clean, that that had to be cut oot. But Jimmy would come along 'What's that fir there?' — 'Well —' because ee ken, ee'd say 'a double shot' — 'Nowt wrang, get eet put in' — 'Well, Anna said I didna need to' — 'A'm tellin' ee, get eet done.'

SB [laughs] 'Cause that was wasting a wee bit o' the cloth y'siee.

ML Yes, yes, aboot maybe six inches, ee ken — but ee ken, six inches ee ken, if it was 30 pun' a metre or whatever, ee ken. Pounds and pennies. So, ee ken, ee'd think 'you auld bugger that ee are', ken, ee'd to sit an put eet in.

SB So he really had the say ower her, but whether he just sorta wanted to dae that 'cause he was the man... Ken what it's like, some o' the men's like, ee ken, 'Oh, that woman's no gan'a boss me about', ee ken? But she wisnae really a fair boss really.

ML No she wasna, no.

SB She wasna firm enough.

ED So you thought she was too soft?

SB Aye she was kinna — she was in a way.

ML She was aye, but that's — an I think that's probably why we used her that way — 'oh she'll let us have a string in the side.'

SB Aye, mmhmm, she'll just say 'oh just leave it — just put a string in it'.

ML 'Just leave it', ee ken. But then of course hie would come along —

SB It was mendable, dinna get us — ee shouldn't have put a string in it if it was mendable, ken. Even if it was gan'a teeke you a while.

ML If ee were unfortunate, ee ken, hie would say 'Nowt wrang — ee can get that done, ee can dae that. Get eet done.'

ED Just more work for you.

ML Aye, so ee ken hie would walk away — 'aw ee auld bugger...', ee ken, ee'd to sit and do —

SB He was a good boss, but a min' sometimes hie used to come in and ee just looked at his face —

ML An ee knew exactly, mmhmm.

SB — and ee thought, oh god he's in yin the day... Ken, so, hie had his moments an aw, didn't hie?

ML Aye, absolutely. Aye. But we were still feart fra him. Ee ken, we were still feart fra him... Ee ken, if we were hingin' ower somebody's table first thing — like we used to dae first thing in the morning — get the coat off, ee ken, hing it on yir hook, between the tables. And eh, Sheila would be — at that time, was maybe a couple o' tables below mie — and 'Are ee

ML cont.	alright Sheila the day?' — 'Aye, aye, are ee alright Mags?' — 'Fine aye' — we'd stertin chit chat, ee ken, an of course the bottom doors would fly open and hie would come 'Hey! Come on — eight o'clock.'		was a good thing that he did, because she worked and talked, so I mean a did an aw — so I mean ee did make mair money at the end o' the day. But, oh I didna want'a gan, but he says 'No, I've been watching ee', he says 'yow and Sheila's just sit an blether'.
SB	Min' when I worked wi' Sheila — a worked wi' this other lassie' — an, ken, sitting at the table that we were. And he came ower on the Friday, it was yin Friday, and he says 'Right', he says 'now a'm moving ee — a'm splittin' you yins up.' A says 'Oh, what have we done wrong?' — He says 'Oh you just sit an talk', ee ken. He says 'Ee can talk and work the same time', but he says 'ee just stop the work' — ken like to talk — 'forget aboot your work'. So, I thought, oh... where we gan. And he says to me, he says 'Oh you're gan up wi' Maureen Hogg' — a says 'Oh yir no puttin' us wi' Maureen Hogg, are ee?' — D'you ken whee a mean, Maureen Harkness, she lives along the water side?	ED	Em, yeah, Judith said that — could women have been bosses — and could they sort of progress up the ladder in the same way that men could, do you think? If they wanted to go into management roles and things like that.
		ML	Well, Sheila you were a boss in the finish, just aboot?
		SB	Aye, I think ee could if ee wanted to sorta, kinna, ken, gan up an that like — but a dae think many women would have wanted to.
ML	Morag, ee ken Morag?	ML	But ee didnae hev much chance, really, did ee? 'Cause there was nae other men in the flat then, was there?
JJ	Oh yes.		
ML	Aye, her mother. She was a good worker mind, she was — she was a quick worker, wasn't she? And he says 'I'm putting you up next to Maureen Hogg', and it's 'Oh...' — 'Aye, Monday morning. Yir table's gettin' shifted up there.' So, I mean, in a way it	SB	No. Jimmy was the only yin that worked among a' the women, wasn't hie? An he only come in'a dae the machine, as I say, he used to put eet throw when they'd been washed an that, an cut the tails off an that on hie's machine — cut the holes in if we'd left a knot.

JJ So were you a supervisor when you —

SB No, no really, I wasn— no, I wasnae really a supervisor. There was only about five an oo left, wasn't there?

ML Aye at the finish, but we did kinna refer til ee as our boss, aye, at the finish because... Ee needed a leader. Ee did, ee needed — although we were a' competent enough, but you still need, when there's a group of you like that, you do need to hev a person that you can say 'Well, what d'you think?' ee ken.

SB Mmhmm. And then even — even getting the rolls o' the tweed through. I mean, sometimes you think 'Oh, a dinna fancy darning that yin', ee ken? So I mean, if ee got yir ain way, ee would just say 'Oh, well a'm no wantin' that one', ee ken? So I mean, you had to hev somebody — you needed somebody to kinda say, you — that's yours. Or ee'd teeke aw the good yins, ken. 'Cause there was some that was really good to get.

ML Oh aye, mmhmm.

SB There was some horrors... I liked a herringbone. I liked a herringbone, did you?

ML Aye, aye.

SB You ken what I mean by a herringbone?

ML Patren.

SB Patren, aye. They were good to work wi'. 'Cause they were a bit interesting, because sometimes you lifted twee stitches up an missed twee, it was that aw the way along, and then the next time — to get your patren right — you had to lift two and then the next time you lifted it was one, an... if ee'd went off that it went off the patren didn't it, aye?

ML Made a long stitch.

SB Was quite interesting... We often had a long stitch, but you just went back.

ML Stick it to taste. [laughs]

ED So you just followed — you followed the stitches that were there? You didn't have any like, patterns to refer to?

SB No, you just got your tweed and then you thought, that's the — the way the patren went.

ML It usually worked out every eighth weft thread was the same.

ED Okay, so then you knew what you were doing.

SB But you werena long in learning the patrens like, were ee?

ML Every eight or sixteen, it always worked in eights, didn't it?

SB Aye, mmhmm. You werena long learnin' —

ML You werenae long in learning — the basic patrens anyway — the Celtics, your twist— your twee an twees twills and herringbones — they were the main yins. Until a' the fancy silks appeared, and then ee'd to — that's where ee really hed to think twice aboot — ee couldnae just stick eet in, ee ken, ee'd to think twice about it. Because believe it or no, wi' a silk thread, if — and fine that they were — if ee made a mistake it really showed oot when it was scoored, because it seemed to brighten eet up even maire. It was, ee ken, it was — ee just had to be that bit mair carefu'.

ED And it would have been so intricate with silk as well? That's where the eyesight comes in. So how do you feel, sort of looking back now, is there anything that you would say that you miss, and is there anything that you would say you really don't miss?

ML I actually miss gan oot, ken, 'cause it was good company, wasn't it?

SB Aw it was good company, aye.

ML It was good company, aye, mmhmm.

SB You miss it aw, you ken, you div.

ML Aye. An the clatter, ee ken. It was... Aw aye, it was all style — it was good, it really was.

SB Aye if ee could just turn the clock back, ken, a mean, it would be okay.

ML Jist for a wee while, aye.

SB A wee while, just to siee, but as I say, things might no be the same, ee ken, but... Well it would if you were turnin' the clock back. But in latter years, I mean things did change, but they change in life anyway, divn't they?

ML Because we changed, divn't we? Ee ken, everybody changes. Ee get aulder to start wi', god... But no it... It was happy days, put it like that. Good fun, good days. Ee hed to work, there was — ee ken, it wasna aw fun. Ee hed tae work, ee hed to show weelin' - and if ee didna sometimes ee were pulled up for eet.

SB Oh aye, I mean ee didna — ee didna get away wi' anything, really like.

ML No, no. An a mean we did respect, ee ken, oor bosses, otherwise if ee didna respect them then ee never ever would, would ee? And I think that's half the trouble nowadays. But no, ee respected them... Sometimes ee'd say — you went 'Oh the old bugger', ee ken, behind their back, but I mean —

SB [laughs] Aye but no 'a their face.

ML But no 'a their face.

SB But you still respected them like, didn't you?

ML Aye, absolutely.

SB Nuh, they were really good times.

ED So nothing that you'd say that you really struggled with, or something that — I mean something that Ann and Mags had mentioned was the heat sometimes in summer in the darning flat at Reid & Taylor and it would get so hot in there, but was there things like that?

ML Well, oor darning flat was completely different fra Reid & Taylor's.

SB We didna feel as shut in, 'cause as a say we had windas right doon the side — I mean they were all windas, you wouldnae

pull — you only got yin bit o' it to open like, didn't you? But you got plenty fresh air, and there was loads o' lights, 'cause I mean — ken, light in the bit. Sometimes you would be pullin' the blind doon 'cause you couldnae see, which is a shame ee ken, but —

ML It did get warm, dinnae get us wrong, but I mean —

SB Aye it did get warm, but if you opened the door an that in the summer it was awright, wasn't it?

ML It was actually a better darning flat than the Ford Mill an a'.

SB Aye, the Ford Mill was up the stair a wee bit, wasn't it? I wouldnae like to have sat up there. But I think Reid & Taylor's was a wee bit claustrophobic, ken? We were quite lucky 'cause we had a good yin, didn't we?

ML Yes, aye. It was mair like an attic across there, as was the Ford. Oors wasnae like that at aw.

ED Did you ever have cause to go into other mills?

ML Well, I used to gan meet me mother when I was still in school. I used to gan meet

ML cont. me mother across there, but I mean other than that, no, nuh. An a dinna even think we were ever sent?

SB Nuh, we were never sent anywhere.

ML Ken, as apprentices ee used to have to — ee were sent tae dae shopping and what not, but I cannae ever think o' gan'a any other mill to —

SB Oh, Kenny said when ee were an apprentice, ee used to get their shopping list — wasn't it a' the bloody mairried yins — and ee were away up the street — ee were away for ages weren't you?

ML Aye, getting the shopping, aye.

SB Even in later years like, somebody would say 'Oh if you're gan up the street—' maybe you were gan up the street for some pies or summat, somebody was going up — 'Och ee couldnae gan'a the Chemist and get us this?' And then eet a' got stopped, didn't it? Ken, 'cause I mean ee just used tae gan oot o' the mill and back in, and then I think it was when Hector took ower, and he says 'Look', he says 'this'll hae'a stop — even if you're gan'a the doctors, ee must clock out and clock in.' And, like for years we would never think o' fires an that, but y'siee it was all fire regulations. He says 'If your cairds in—'

which is right enough, if you're clocked in and you're up the street, well I mean if there's a fire, you're — somebody's gan in and search for ee. But y'siee aw them things changed ower the years — years ago you wouldnae think aw them things, would ee? And yet there would be the same chance o' daein it, you ken, really. So it kinna got stopped, so we didnae dae that many messages efter that, did we?

ML Nuh, nuh. On a Friday you used to have to gan up the street to the post office and get the stamps for the week, ee ken, for the office, and also the insurance stamps, 'cause you got them at the post office. And the apprentice had to dae that, ee ken — you went '[gasps] aw this money', and you were away up to the post office for aw this.

ED So d'you know what happened to everything — when your mill shut down, d'you know what happened to things like the machinery and all the equipment and all of the tools? Where did all of that go?

SB Think maist o' it would be taken away to Yorkshire, wouldn't it?

ML It was, aye.

ED So did it move? Did the mill move?

SB Well, somebody came in and they sorta amalgamated wi' wee Neill's o' Langholm, efter Kenneth Neill an them died, and it was some bit in Yorkshire, wasn't it?

ML Illingworth & Morris.

SB Illingworth & Morris, and they were a branch o' them, so... I think when they closed — 'cause they had the Ford Mill an aw, didn't they? They doon scarves there, just before we finished. And I think maist o' the stuff would be moved down 'a Yorkshire, but a dae ken if it'll be there now or no, because I mean there'll no be many doon there, will there?

ML No, I dae even think Illingworth & Morris is still gan.

SB A dae think it exists now, a dunno.... I get a wee pension — well, it's no off them, but it comes throw the Prudential.

ML Oh right.

SB A dae ken how a got a pens— wie pension. 'Cause we dinna — ee ken, we didna really pay a lot into a pension in them days, did we? 'Cause a mind when a finished an a thought 'och' — a mean it's no a lot o' money, but better as nowt. Get you a few gins, ken. But... a dae ken how we go it?

ML A dae ken, a canna think aboot that.

SB 'Cause we wouldna pay much int'a it, I think we did join a pension scheme but I mean we wouldnae pay much in against anything... Comes every month, so I'll no moan about it. As a say it's no a lot, but it's better as nowt.

ML Aye, absolutely, aye.

ED Have you got any reminders or remnants of the industry or of your former jobs, within your own houses these days?

ML Remnants, nuh... As I say, I was looking for photos an I cannae find them.

JJ You've still got your snippers, your pickers and things.

SB Oh aye, I've still ma mouters and ma scissors.

ML Pickers, aye, they're in a tin up in the attic actually.

SB 'Cause I looked at them last time when I was, ken, flitting an that, and a thought 'Oh a'll no need them', an a thought 'Oh a ca—' a haen' the hairt 'a put them oot. But I mean if I'm away the mornin', naebody'll want them, they'll wonder what they are!

ML We ended up wi' a cloth on our finger, didn't we?

SB Aye, that's what I was sayin'a Judith. Ken, ee used to hev the thimble there?

ML And doon away wi' the thimble, aye.

SB But it used to sweat, the thimble, didn't it, if ee had it on aw day.

ML Aye, oh it used to stink, it was awful.

SB Oh it was fair wisn't lookin'.

ML And we made this cloth wi' bailey cloth — we'd hev that on oor finger.

SB So we were really actually shovin' the thing through wi' that.

ML We fit the needle up into here raither as on here, 'cause it used tae gan up into here. Which actually, it worked oot easier. Ee were actually quicker.

SB It did, it worked oot better. It was when you took the thimble off at night like, you ken, an you thought 'Ooh, look at eet' — it was aw dry an — wisn't it?

ML And your little finger, ken, your middle finger was fair perished and it was stinkin'. Aye, it was horrible. But that was

how we were trained, that's how Greta trained us, to dae eet the proper way, so that when we went'a Gala, we were showing them that that was the way we were trained, which was the right thing 'a dae really. But then efter ee come oot your training, it was up to yow, as long as you're doing the work properly.

SB Aye, min' we used the thimble for a long time, didn't we, ken.

ML Yes we did, aye. Aye.

SB But it was, ken aw — that was your hand aw day, ken, just... pullin' it through, daein some more stitches, pullin' it through. That was life, wasn't it Mag? It was good though.

ML Good wrist action. [laughs]

JJ Is it taking you right back — having these memories, talking about it?

ML It's good actually, it's really good.

SB Aye, because ee dinna siece folk the same now.

ML Nuh. Nuh, ee dinna.

SB We're like that wi' the Common Riding, y'siece. Ee ken, we can have some nights

SB cont. sittin' just talking about the Common Riding — just what's happened an that. Ken, like Fiona Stirling and Muriel an them, an we can have great nights an it's just reminiscing, an ee ken — Colin says 'Ee ken, other folk wouldnae think there wis funny', but you ken, we just — just think they're great. Aye, I like a bit o' reminiscing...

ED Mmm, it's when you know all the stories and the characters.

SB 'O good times anyway, ken, a dinna like the bad times, but... Good times were good.

ML But that's life isn't it — good and bad.

ED So are there any really — just really memorable moments that have stayed with you that are still really vivid?

SB No really any that fair stands oot, it's just the whole thing was just good and... the company was good, the work was good, and... Nah it was just — they were just as Mag says, just happy times.

ML Happy days, aye.

SB And they're just nice to look back an think well we've went through them happy times, ken.

ML I enjoyed it, ee ken, the good and the bad — I did, I enjoyed eet. I liked me work.

SB I mean we did like when the Friday come, mind, ee ken, ee think 'Oh aye we're off at the weekend' — everybody does, but...

ML But no, I liked me work.

SB Well we did, we did like oor work.

ML And I didna like to be late —

SB I ken some young yins would think oo were silly, ee ken, saying 'Oh, you couldna possibly have liked your work, sittin' in a mill aw day?' But we did, mmhmm, was good. An ee'd a lot o' good freens an... friendships and good laughs, weren't they?

ML Well there ee are, I mean that's 50 plus years and we're still freens.

SB I still — what year did ee stert at the mill?

ML '65, August — Hector Barnfather an I sterted efter the Trades fortnight, August '65.

SB '63 a sterted.

ML Min' it as plain as day the first day there.

ED And do you still feel connected in any ways to the textile industry nowadays? Like, you know, there are things going on with textiles in the town still, in different ways — or just more in kind of domestic ways. I just wondered if you still feel connected to that?

ML If it ever came up, if anybody's, like, talking about eet, I would say 'Oh, I was a derner at Neill's Mill — worked there for years.' I would always bring it into the conversation regardless, 'cause it always happens, somebody — 'Well, what did ee used to dae?' Ken, 'afoor ee mairried' or owt like that. 'Oh I was a derner at Neill's Mill' — 'Neill's Mill?' — I says 'Aye, where the Co is now.'

SB Where the Co-op is, aye. A lot o' them say 'Oh... wasnae a mill there.'

JJ You were saying that you do sewing now. What sort of things do you sew?

ML Oh, I dinna sew near as much as I use—I bought me'sel a new sewing machine, just no that affa lang ago either, thinking I would really get back in it—'cause I used to sew a lot when I was younger. I made a' things — a' me dresses and everything, just used to clart 'em. In fact, I've seen — of a Saturday morning — I would send away for material, it was Crimplene at

the time — send away for this ee ken, oot of a brochure or something. And it would come, and of a Saturday morning I would get up and make me'sel a dress tae gan oot wi' on the Saturday night. [laughter]

SB It would be Crimplene, was it?

ML It was Crimplene, Shiela, yes it was Crimplene.

SB Can you mind o' Crimplene?

ML It was the grand stuff.

SB It was good washing stuff, wasn't it?

ML Yes, didna need any ironing. Wash eet an hing it on the line an it was ready for the next day if you wanted eet.

JJ But you know in Bell's Mill there are still a few small businesses, like Drove Weaver's, has got a new lease of life, and Elliott's Shed, you know with his pedal looms making beautiful throws, Lynn Elliot.

ML And that's good, that really is good.

JJ And Rose's Wardrobe — you know the two who are making vintage-inspired clothes, they're actually based in the darning flat in Robbie's place.

ML Oh right, aye.

JJ Yeah. And Alan Miller with his Yarns to Yearn For, you know, he sells yarns all over the world. And his yarns are woven by Robbie to make the collectible teddies and the dogs.

ML Isn't it great like, aye.

JJ So there are little things going on.

ML Absolutely, aye.

SB Well Colin got yin made oot his — ken when he was Cornet, and ken the black and white check breeches? And Alan Miller got him yin made — oh, it was brilliant. Fair like it.

ML Aye, they're lovely.

SB I think it was Alan that said to me an that, he says 'Div ee never fancy getting — using your, what you had as leggings when you were Cornet', and he says 'You can get a Teddy Bear made oot o' it.' So we've got twee and I gave Linda yin, ken my niece yin, I gave her yin for a keepsake. But the yin that he got for Colin, ken the wee teddy's sittin' up like that, an he's got '1967' on the feet.

ML Aw nice, aye.

SB It's fair nice, ee ken, oh she made a right good job o' it. But ee ken, they were just in a box. An a says to Colin 'So d'you think I should get them cut up?' A says 'Well— am no that bothered aboot teddies, but a says 'They're just in a box, well naebody's wanting them.' And we've nae family, so I mean, if we were away the mornin', it'll all just get binned, they'll get a skip and put everything in likely.

ML A ken, that's the scary bit.

SB And no, I says — a ken, that is scary — an a thought 'No, I'll just get eet made' and aw it was super, I'm fair thrilled wi' eet. Specially wi' the, ken, the 'r' and the 'g', and the '67' on the next foot ee ken, it was lovely.

ML So as ee say there's still things gan on, an it's great.

JJ Mmhmm, and a lot of people are making stuff out of the textile waste from Robbie's —

ML I saw your bags, aye they're great.

JJ Yes, and Pauleen's made some lovely bags and quilts and cushions, and all sorts of things, from textile waste.

SB That's good like.

ML Oh Pauleen's always daein something like, puts mie 'a shame. A'm drinking and she's sewing! [laughter]

SB Well ee canna dae everything Mag. [laughs]

ML No, nuh...

SB But they've just always been connected wi' Langholm, the textile mills, an a dinna th— well, a dae ken aboot younger yins now, but I mean, we'll never forget them, ken?

ML The town has completely changed since the mills stopped. But as Judith says, there's still that gan on — which is great, because that, ken, geez the place still a connection to the textiles. Which is great, so therefore, it's never gan'a be forgotten is it?

ED And it's the sort of thing that inspires — I think will inspire people, you know, young people living in the town, or people to maybe start a new wee business or things like that.

ML But have they got the likes o' weavers and darners coming on?

JJ No, they are struggling. We're seeing Eenie tomorrow. And I know that, you

know, him and Robbie would love to take some apprentices on.

ML Aye, and have ee got folk to train them?

JJ Well, it would be, you know, Steven, and the people who were already in there, who would train them up, but younger people don't really seem to want to go into it. And I think partly it's because maybe parents and grandparents think there's no future in it, because it isn't like it used to be. It's now very small scale. But it's small scale, high quality. You know, and through Robbie's, they get Chanel, they get all sorts of high quality stuff. So there still is a demand, but it's small scale, it's small businesses. But the Scottish brand is still really well respected round the world, and I think there is a future for that. But it'll never go back to how it was.

SB No, it'll never gan back, but it'd be nice to think that some — ken, it was keepin' gan.

JJ Something — yeah, yeah.

SB 'Cause, well, when we sterted there was like — they took apprentices in twice a year. Obviously you left school at Easter then, and then the Summer — and Christmas, they would take three lots in. And they used to always take some — like fra Easter holidays, and then the Summer,

SB cont. and then Christmas holidays.

ML Mmhmm. Because when a first stert— I had to gan for a test first. Doon’a siee the bosses — whee was Kenneth Neill an them — and they gave mie a test before I ever got in the door. And it was — it was actually Greta, hed a piece o’ fabric, and she hed eet — there was different faults on eet, and she asked us if I could siee the faults on that piece of fabric. And I picked them oot and they said ‘Oh aye, she’s gran’, aye well ee can stert on Monday, we’ll bring ee in on Monday’ — well, or efter the holiday, Trades holiday, and that’s how I got in.

SB But y’siee they took a lot o’ apprentices on, didn’t they? Ken, for everything in the mill.

JJ Another interesting thing is in — in Bell’s — its now owned by a company in Bradford, SIL Holdings. But in what used to be the old spinning shed they’ve built kind of a big container, it’s like a big Portacabin inside the spinning shed, and they bring their cashmere scarves up from Yorkshire to have them inspected and combed and fringed, labelled and packed there. They’ve also got a really high tech embroidery machine to do the logos.

ML So whee does that then Judith?

JJ Em, Tricia Little works there. Maxine Fletcher. There was about eight of them before COVID, and they are talk— they were talking of building another pod, ‘cause it’s a huge shed. And again, high quality stuff, and of course they get the Scottish brand, although it’s actually woven in Yorkshire, but it’s coming — they have it finished at Schofield’s, Galashiels, so it’s kind of a reverse thing, you know, it’s coming back slowly. So, little green shoots, we hope.

ML Great, oh aye. Little acorns come mighty oaks...

SB An I mean, you can only try and keep things gan like that, I mean ee can’t siee what’s gonna go on, but... just a different world now, isn’t it, ken? No like the good old days.

ML Well there’s yin thing, they’ll never come back, will they.

SB No they wunna, no.

ML Unfortunately.

SB Never mind, if we’re in a home thegither Mag we can sit an reminisce, won’t we, eh?

ML [laughing] 'D'you min' the size o' yon lassie's erse, when she was —' [laughter]

SB '...She needed a big stool an a cushion.'

ML Big stool an a cushion. [laughter]

ED Well, thanks so much.

ML You're welcome lovely, you're very well.

ED It's been lovely listening to you —

SB You've made oo wantin' tae gan back to the mills now, could gan back for a month, couldn't we Mag?

ML A ken, I know, aye.

ED Do you think you could still just fall back into it?

SB I think you could, aye.

ML A think a could, aye, mmhmm.

SB A think sae, aye. I've often sat an thought, ee ken, a dae ken what a was daein', an a'm thinking 'Oh an I used to sit like that' an I thought, 'I won'er if I could still dae it?' I think ee would — it'll be something you'll no forget. I maybe wouldnae be as quick mind, but...

ED It's like a musician.

ML The skills are still there.

ED I used to play the violin when I was in school and I think I'd be quite rusty now, but —

ML You'd soon get back in til it though, wouldn't ee? Practice again...

ED Exactly, yeah, build up the pads on your fingers...

ML Absolutely. [laughter] 'Cause that's what we would have to dae if we were rubbing the cloth, we would hae'a build up... Some folk used to use TCP, didn't they? On their finger ends to try and toughen them up.

SB Aw, see if ee'd been working — ken we had a lot o' overtime and been really busy — an a mean —

ML They were red raw.

SB Aw they were red, just straight along there, an I mean they actually did bleed, didn't they? Ken they would just rub through an, oft, they were sair. Then you used to get plaisters on them, didn't you?

ML Aye. Ee could never feel the same wi' the plaisters on. A can ae min' Linda Murphy,

ML cont.	her's used to be really bleedin' didn't they, they were really affa.
SB	Aye. Obviously some must have, ken, been rubbing harder, really firm.
ML	Aye. Can ae min' o' Linda Murphy's. A dae ken how she actually managed to finish pickin' a piece when they were bleeding the way that they were.
ED	Start bleeding all over the —
ML	I know. Ee wouldnae get away wi' it now, would ee. You would not.
SB	Oh nuh, you wouldnae, no. Used to be wrapped up like sair thumbs, didn't they?
ML	They did.
SB	However, it was good.
ED	Grand. Thank you.
ML	You're welcome.
SB	You're welcome.

Langholm Made conversation participants:

Sheila Barnfather
Katrine A. Eagleson
Ann Hislop
Mac Hotson
Ramsay Johnstone
Patrick (Pat) A. Keeney
Margaret (Mags) E. Latimer
Ian Maxwell
Alan Miller
Duncan Ritchie
Michael (Mick) Ryan
Margaret (Mag) Wilson

With thanks to Ron Addison for research assistance

Project supported by:

Lucy MacLeod, Outpost Arts
Judith Johnson, Langholm Initiative
Amy Marletta, Upland
Margaret Pool, Welcome to Langholm



ARCHIE SUTTER
WATT TRUST



Transcription Support:

Katherine Latimer

Transcript Design:

Samuel Sparrow



Upland is a bold, ambitious, rural-based visual art and craft development organisation based in Dumfries & Galloway, South West Scotland.

hello@weareupland.com

Facebook: / weareupland

Twitter: / weareupland

Instagram: / upland.cic

weareupland.com

Upland Arts Development CIC is registered in Scotland as a Community Interest Company. Limited by Guarantee No. SC350101 Registered office: Gracefield Arts Centre, 28 Edinburgh Road, DG1 1JQ