

**Jessie McIntyre Lyons (née Wightman) (JML) born 5<sup>th</sup> January 1934**

**Interview with Judy Caine (JC), 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018**



**JC:** Jessie, tell me how you came to Corby?

**JML:** I came down to Corby October 1955. Came down because my husband to be was down here and he was to come back to Dundee and we were to get married in 1956. But he was fed up down here and my Auntie said I should just come down here ('cause he would just pack it in and we wouldn't be able to get a house). So he put his name down for a house. At that time you could get a house within a year. He was working in the blast furnace. He was there 30 odd years. We were in upteen digs – wrote a parody of what I went through, with me being in a letter/script/drama thing with Paula.

*[Note: Paula Bolton is a local musician, composer and musicologist.]*

**JC:** Do you think it is important that we try and capture some of the old Scottish songs now and pass them on to the next generation?

**JML:** Yes, I do really. But the thing is, will they be interested? It should be kept anyway. It's sad if you lose your culture. I mean, I did sociology in college. When they were all made redundant in the works I went back into education, to get the education I should have had when I left school, y'know. My Dad was one of those you don't need to educate girls, "It's a waste of time, 'cause they just got married." So I left school at 15 and that was the first year that they moved the leaving date from 14 to 15. I had to stay on at school for a whole extra year!

I left on the Friday and I started on the Monday in the jute mill as a trainee weaver. I'll never forget that first day. I walked in the door and the gaffer said, "Follow me", now, I had hair down to my waist at that time 'cause I'd just left school, "and I'll take you up to my bucky." that was his office. I looked down the weaving shed and there was all this machinery and belts going round and up to the ceiling and the shuttle going backwards and forwards and I remember wrapping my hair round my chest. It was terrifying. It was something else.

When I came down to Corby there were 140 jute mills in Dundee because it was a textile town. Now I think there's three – maybe not even three. They brought out polyurethane. Dundee supplied the canvass backing for linoleum and carpets but they brought out polyurethane and that took over.

*[JC asks question about working songs in the jute mills.]*

**JML:** No idea! Although my Dad used to sing a song, "I am a Dundee Weaver", but it must have been a bit naughty as we always got taken out of the room when he was singing it!

*[Miscellaneous comments from JC's written notes:*

*Jessie's Mum came from Stepps in Glasgow on the west coast of Scotland. Her Dad was from Dundee where her Mum met him having gone there to find work. Jessie was brought up in Dundee on the east coast of Scotland.*

*Jessie worked as a volunteer for East Midlands Arts who eventually put her in touch with Kate Dyer, CEO at Corby Community Arts.*

*Jessie Lyons sings seven songs she remembers as a child, as sung by Sir Harry Lauder who often performed at the Dundee Rep. although she heard his songs on records in the home. (Sir Harry Lauder was a Scottish singer and comedian in the music hall/vaudeville theatre tradition.)]*

**[Audio starts here]**

**1. Sailing up the Clyde**

*Sailing up the Clyde, sailing up the Clyde,  
Back tae bonnie Scotland an yir ain fireside.  
There's a lump comes in ye throat and a tear ye cannie hide.  
When ye're sailing back tae Scotland an yir ain fireside.*

**2. I Belong to Glasgow**

*I belong to Glasgow,  
Dear old Glasga toon,  
There's something the matter with Glasgow,  
Cos it's goin' 'roon an 'roon.  
I'm only a common old working chap  
As anyone here can see,  
But when I get a half on a Saturday night  
Glasgow belongs to me.*

**3. Glasgow on the Clyde**

*Glasgow on the Clyde,  
Glasgow on the Clyde,  
There's no a place in all the world,  
In all the world so wide.  
So be ye rich, or be ye poor,  
Or be ye up or doon,  
You'll always find a welcome in  
Dear ol' Glasgow toon.*

**4. The Inverary Inn**

*Oh, there's a nice wee Inn  
The Inverary Inn,  
I was never in a nicer Inn before.  
And there's a bro wee lassie at the Inverary Inn*

*A bonnie, bonnie lassie I adore.  
Oh, she's simply wonderful, marvellous,  
The bonnie at the Inn of Inverary.  
And on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June I'll be on m'honeymoon  
With the bonnie at the Inn of Inverary.*

**5. You Can Come and See the Baby**

*So, y'can come and see the baby any day y'care to call,  
Cos he's lyin' beside his mummy in a wee white shawl.  
An' he looks so neat and tidy like a dumplin' in a hanky,  
And I'm goin' to call him William Angus Jamieson Jock McCall.  
Oh, rumamam dum a dum a day, rumamam dum a daddy o,  
We have a bairny in the hoos, and I am his daddy o.*

**6. I'm Going Now**

*[Jessie speaks 2 lines]*

*"I'm goin' now so  
Before I go"*

*[then sings ...]*

**7. Just a Wee Doch-an-Doris** [lit. "drink of the door" – i.e. "one for the road"]

*Just a wee doch-an-doris, just a wee half, that's all,  
Just a wee doch-an-doris before I gang awa'.  
There's a wee wifie waitin' in a wee but-an-ben.  
If you can say, "It's a braw bricht moonlicht nicht," ye're a' richt, ye ken.*

**JC:** Do you think the young people in Corby now are still learning Scottish songs?

**JML:** Well, I don't know because we don't have that now. Nowadays, it's all discos and they all go out drinkin' an' all that. There was nothing like that when I was young. That [Harry Lauder] was your entertainment, especially at the New Year. That was an excuse to have a drink for the women. The men tended to go out for a drink and the women stayed at home. Although I must admit the West Coast was entirely different from the East Coast. Dundee is on the East Coast. On the West Coast they used to drink in the house. My Dad used to say that's not drinking to be sociable, that's drinking cos you need a drink [laughs]. There's a difference you know! I remember when I came down here the first year we went back up, I was pregnant within the first year, and I went back up to Dundee and my Dad says to George [Jessie's husband]. "Go get yerself ready and we'll go for a pint." So George gets up and I get myself up and go get my coat. My Dad says, "Where you goin'?" I said, "I'm coming with you." He says, "Are you, hell! There's no way you're walking in a pub with me. No, you're not comin'." I said, "You've no business tellin' me I can't go." and I looked at George and he says, "Well, what do you want me to do?" and I said "Well, if I'm not goin', you're not goin' either." My Dad walked out mad as hell.

Well, I had the two kids within four years and then I had to get a job. So I got a job in a pub. I used to work between the three pubs in the village – the White Horse, the Nag’s Head – now a home – across from the Corby Heritage Centre, and the White Hart. But I wasn’t so keen on the White Hart because it was where a lot of the local villagers used to go. But every time the kids were on holiday I just packed it in, but there was always someone at the door askin’ me to go back when schools went back in because I didn’t drink. They could leave me in the pub in the morning and I would clean and see to whatever and it would be quite safe. So I never was without work. It suited me because half past ten in the morning till three o’clock in the afternoon was the pub hours same as school. It was just lovely. I didn’t need anybody. There was no grannies in the town, just young couples like me – so you were stuck [i.e. if you had to work when the kids were at home].

**JC:** So did that [*not having grannies*] give rise to another different type of community?

**JML:** Oh yes, everyone knew one another. In fact, people would hardly believe you now. I remember when the Suez Canal thing broke out I was pregnant and was in digs and the bloke that we were in digs with got called back to the Army – must have been end of 1956. His wife wouldn’t live down here on her own. She was from the borders and went back home. So that was us without digs. I went into a café in the town for a cuppa. George said not to worry he’d put the word out. People just spoke to one another then. There was this woman (in the café) with a lot of girls about two years of age and I was talking to her and she was with a friend and I caught the gist of their conversation. She’d just got a house and she said she didn’t know what to do ‘cause he’s night shift and she’d never been on her own. I said, “Still, you’re lucky you’ve got a key now.” I said, “I’ve just had to look for new digs. I’ve got to find something quick.” She said to come and stay with her. I said, “But you don’t even know me.” She said, “I don’t need to know you. Would you come and stay with me?” And she turned to her friend saying, “There! Now I don’t need to worry about being on my own!” She said, “Where are you living now?” I said, “Landseer Court” which was just up the street. “Oh, right.” she said, “Can you move today?” I said yes and when George came home from work I said I’ve got us some digs up the road, brand new house down in Bonnington Walk. Her name’s Margaret and she comes from Rosthey. So there was me with a pram and a wardrobe and we moved in that day and we were with her for six weeks before I got a key a bit further down and that was next to Paula Bolton’s Dad. He was a chemist. He had the Chemist opposite where the Pluto [pub] used to be.

So that was me in Bonnington Walk. But I never settled and George said to me, “If you still feel like that next year, we’ll go home.”

*[Jessie and George did in fact go back to Stepps (mining village just outside Glasgow) from 1960 to 1964, but because they had lived away they could not get a house. They came back in 1964, just as Stewart and Lloyds had been taken over by British Steel and settled back in Corby eventually getting a house on Stevie Way. They had two girls – one went to Spain, the other to Croydon and then to Wales.]*