

Project: Pennylands Camp 22 - WW2 POW Camp
 Respondent: Ferries James Little.
 Year of Birth: 1936.
 Age: 81.
 Connection to project: Was born and brought up on Dumfries House Estate.
 Date of Interview: 11th August 2017.
 Interviewer: Bobby Grierson.
 Recording Agreement: Yes
 Information & Content: Yes
 Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 1)
 Location of Interview: Skype. Cumnock, Ayrshire.



Full Transcript
Introduction, welcome and information about respondent.
Q1. What is your connection to Pennylands Camp?
<p>A1. I was born at Grimgrew one of the cottages on the Dumfries House Estate and I was aware of Pennylands from about the age of six and going round with my father who was the Shepherd on Dumfries House Estate and the camp had just been completed but was not occupied to that extent. It wasn't a prisoner of war camp.</p> <p>The biggest problem they had was that the sewage treatment plant didn't work because whoever had constructed it had only sealed the connections on top of the pipes with cement. The plant discharged into the river Lugar up river from the Lady's Bridge.</p>
Q2 Can you tell me a little about your family, your parents and any siblings?
<p>A3. I was the only one. My mother Violet Cameron was also born and brought up on the estate and she was one of eight. Her father James Cameron was the estate joiner for 50 years as was his father before him. He lived at the Longrig, which is shown on one of the photos you have. There were two houses together at the bottom of the Longrig, one that faced onto the Longrig where John Murray lived and he had eight of a family. The other house was where my grandfather lived and called Mountallan Cottage and looked on to the A70, the main Road into Cumnock.</p> <p>What about your dad's history?</p>
Q4. Can you tell me about Grimgrew Cottage where you were born?
<p>A4. If you come out the West Gate of the estate, Grimgrew is about a mile on the left on the A70 as you head for Ochiltree. It was made up of two cottages. One was my father, James Littles house and the other was the farm foreman's.</p>
Q5. Where did you live on the Estate?
<p>A5. I lived at Grimgrew where I was born. It was a home delivery, it was a Dr McQueen that did it but, and this is where the story of Ferries comes in. Because I was a big baby there was a nurse came and her name was nurse Ferries and she specialised in dealing</p>

with big babies and my mother decided to call me Ferries. Years later we were coming from a friend's house in a taxi to go home and the taxi driver asked which one of you is called Ferries and I says, 'I am.' He says, 'So am I!' and I said but it won't be spelled the same as mine, but it was! He says, 'I was born at home and I was a big baby and it was the same nurse! She came from Inverness.

Q6. What are your earliest memories of life on the estate?

A6. I think my first recollection would be when I went to school and started at the Primary up the wee brae at Barrhill Road in Cumnock at the age of five. I went right through to Cumnock Academy when I left in the 6th year. We got out one day, early because there were tanks coming and they came off at Cumnock Station up the road from school. This would have been about 1940/41. They were Churchill tanks, they had a wee pop gun, a two-inch gun. We had to walk home and at my grandfather's house at Mountallan, on the way up the Longrig where the men were billeted, the first tanks had knocked down the sandstone gate-post on the left-hand side and the next one knocked down the one on the right-hand side. There was a group of tanks there on the right-hand side and some on the left as you went up to Dumfries House Station where there was a line of big trees. At the woods there was a regiment of Irish Fusiliers, now they had the cockades, green for the soldiers and blue for the officers and I could sit on a fence down from Mountallan and watch them at reveille. They also had tanks coming from Auchinleck station and they went down through the gates and into the top on the camp and there was a lager down there. A lager is a German term for a place where you would keep armaments.

Q7. What other children or families lived on the Estate?

A7. There was quite a large number one way or another. Take for example at the West Gates, on the left there was three boys there, Porteous, on the other side was Andrew Neil he had two daughters now I think they were a bit older because Andrew had been in the first world war when he was in the Ayrshire Yeomanry and had been badly hurt when out in Egypt with a broken leg but he was mobile

Q8. These were all children of estate workers?

A8. Yes, and there was the head gamekeeper Graham and he had five including Ronald and Ronald and I went to school together. The other gamekeeper, Christison was another kettle of fish. I went to a shoot down at the farm, but I wasn't allowed to shoot, my father was there and he was never very keen on shooting because he was in the first world war, and he says to Graham they're too much bother for me, they're that many holes up the barrel of the gun but bugger-all comes oot!

Q9. Did you know the children that lived up at the Orchard or the Temple Gate House?

A9. No they weren't there at that time, no not to my knowledge. There was a gardener, Wilcox was his name, and his son Dennis was at school with me and the guy that was the chauffeur, his daughter Nancy Rickbey and then he went into the army as he wasn't what was considered a preserved occupation and my father was too old by then

Q10. How did the estate children get to school?

A10. The bus from Ayr came through the estate and you could get that in the morning. This day we were all out and the other gates, Stockiehill Gates that were never used because they had moved the road. On the left-hand side were the Martins and there were three boys there and on the other side were the Blackwoods and Molly Blackwood went to school, she was the same age as me but you're not necessary interested in lassies at that time. At Roseburn was a guy called Dick Waring and he had three daughters and they were all older. One of them worked in Galloways the Chemists in Cumnock Square.

Q11. Earlier you said the camp was under construction in 1941. What was happening before this?

A11. There were tents up at the gates at Auchinleck, in the left-hand area on the road up that came out at Auchinleck graveyard. The tanks came off the train at Auchinleck station and down past Highhouse and were also lined up along the Barony Road. There was a hellava lot of tanks. There were also troops camped up at the fields next to the Barony pit. My father was still going across to that field when there was sheep but then they had to take them back for the simple reason that the fields were being used for things like Bren guns, light ant-tank guns. They lived in tents and had their meals there in a big tent.

Q12. Were you ever allowed into Pennylands Camp itself?

A12. No. What you've got to bear in mind is once it was a prisoner of war camp you didn't go there. We wandered about the estate but not to that extent. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and fully secure and there were Polish guards and I can recall that the senior Polish colonel had a beautiful horse which he rode every day and stabled it at Dumfries House stables. I think his name was Padouriski. The funny thing is he wanted somebody to do his laundry and my aunt Flora did that for him. He was always beautifully dressed with his riding boots highly polished.

Q13. Did you see much of the Bute family on the estate during the war?

A13. Nope. The only thing I did was help my grandfather to gather acorns at the back of the big house, into bags and they were sent down to Cardiff to replant. I got a copy of a letter regarding this from the archives at Bute when I was doing my own family research. Some of these tress are still there.

Q14. Can you tell me a bit more about the Camp?

A14. The camp served two purposes providing accommodation for our and allied troops with another section designated for prisoners of war, initially Italians and subsequently Germans.

