

Project: Pennylands Camp 22 - WW2 POW Camp.  
 Respondent: June McKerrow.  
 Year of Birth: 1929.  
 Age: 87.  
 Connection to project: Secretary at Pennylands Camp.  
 Date of Interview: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017.  
 Interviewer: Roberta McGee.  
 Recording Agreement: Yes.  
 Information & Content: Yes.  
 Photographic Images: Yes (Number of: 4).  
 Length of Interview: 33:56.  
 Location of Interview: Cumnock, Ayrshire.  
 Recording Equipment: Zoom H4n Pro.



Time (from: mins/secs)	Time Coded Full Transcript	Transcribed Extract (from- to: mins/secs)
00.00	<b>Introduction, welcome and information about respondent.</b>	0:33
	<b>Q1. What was your personal connection to Pennylands Camp?</b>	0:34-0:37
	A1. I worked there for 2 years.	
	<b>Q2. What year?</b>	
	A2. In the capacity of a typist in the Orderly Room. That was 1946 to 1947, when it closed.	0:38-0:50
	<b>Q3. Where were you born?</b>	
	A3. I was born in Cumnock.	0:51-0:53
	<b>Q4. Where did you live during the war?</b>	
	A4. Cumnock. And then 2 years I went to live with an aunt in Airdrie and I went to a commercial college in Coatbridge to learn commercial business, shorthand and typing and I was there for about a year and a half and that was during the war really.	0:56-1:20
	<b>Q5. Do you remember the day war was declared?</b>	
	A5. Yes, I was in the Sunday School. The Sunday School teacher told us I'll let you know children we are now at war. Which didn't mean a thing to us as we were just 10, we just looked at him. A war!	1:22-1:40

	<b>Q6. How did your friends and family react to the news?</b>	
	A6. Everybody was shocked.	1:43-1:47
	<b>Q7. What was the atmosphere like in Cumnock?</b>	
	A7. At that time? Well, everybody just had to buckle in and help as much as they could. Different things. And at that time a lot of soldiers billeted in Cumnock and roundabout and they, my own mother and father, if they met any of the soldiers out walking in the Murray Park, they used to invite them up to the house for a cup of tea and a bit blether you know, because they felt sorry for them because they were all far away from home, and they knew their next jaunt would probably go up to Greenock on the boat then put abroad to the fighting. So, it was an anxious time.	1:52-2:29
	<b>Q8. What nationality were the soldiers?</b>	
	A8. There were all types. We had French and we had Irish and English, of course, and then we had a few Poles there as well but gradually they all moved away, moved out, different ones at different times.	2:30-2:53
	<b>Q9. And your mum asked them back to the house?</b>	
	A9. Yes, gave them a cup of tea. Most people were very sympathetic to the fact that the soldiers were billeted there and knew that was them heading for the final, for the fighting.	2:55-3:08
	<b>Q10. Were there tanks in the town as well?</b>	
	A10. Aye, there were tanks. I think they must have been at Pennylands Camp. I'm not sure about that. They used to go down the main road from New Cumnock down that main road, great big tanks and we used to look at them, big noisy things. I don't know where they were going, the only place I could think was they were going to was Pennylands Camp. Having said that there was also an army camp somewhere near Irvine because my friend who also ended up working in Pennylands Camp along with me, she came from the Irvine camp. It closed down and she and, I think, some of the Poles that were billeted there all moved to Auchinleck and she came along with them and she was a typist as well in the Quartermaster's offices where I was across at the Adjutant's office.	3:11-4:08
	<b>Q11. When you heard the news about the war were you afraid?</b>	
	A11. Never gave it a thought, it didn't mean a thing to me at 10. The only thing, as time went on, you couldn't get the things you	4:13-4.50

	would normally have, like fruit and sweets, things like that and biscuits and every time one of the shops said, "Oh, they've got a load of bananas in" there was a big queue a mile long to go and get a banana, a mile long for chocolate biscuits. The Co-operative, that was the biggest shop in Cumnock then. That's the only time I was bothered.	
	<b>Q12. Were your family instructed to take any war precautions?</b>	
	A12. Well, the only thing was all the windows were pasted up you know but the night Clydebank was bombed my mother heard the planes going over. My mother had a big double wardrobe in her bedroom and pulled it up against the window just in case of the glass but nothing ever happened.	4:46-5:16
	<b>Q13. That would be 1941?</b>	
	A13. Aye, that was Clydebank that was bombed	5:17-5:24
	<b>Q14. Did any of your family enlist in the forces?</b>	
	A14. No.	5:27-
	<b>Q15. Were the local aware of a camp being built at Pennylands?</b>	
	A15. I don't think so. I didn't know myself. I was working in Ayr as a shorthand typist in an office in Ayr. It was a friend of mine, her father, phoned me up one day and said, "There's a job going here at the camp." I said, "Whit camp?" "Pennylands Camp" "Where's that?" "It's in Auchinleck and they're desperate for a typist because they're very, very busy." Because we typed out lists and lists and lists of men that were going back to Poland and they needed a Nominal Roll they called it and I suppose that was to check them onto the boats and things like that. I said, "Oh, I wouldn't mind that. I'm fed up travelling from Cumnock to Ayr." So, I went to the camp and got an interview with the Adjutant and I got the job and that was me till the camp closed two years later. I was sorry it had to close because I enjoyed the work.	5:32-6:38
	<b>Q16. How did they advertise the job? Was it in the local paper?</b>	
	A16. No, I never knew a thing about it. It was all hush-hush.	6:42-6:47
	<b>Q18. Where did you go to school?</b>	

	A18. Cumnock. Cumnock Academy.	6:52-6:54
	<b>Q19. Were you given gas-masks?</b>	
	A19. Yes.	6:57-6:58
	<b>Q20. Did you carry them with you every day?</b>	
	A20. Yes.	7:00-7:01
	<b>Q21. Were you given a safety drill?</b>	
	A21. Yes, we had to go underneath our desks at school. If there was an air-raid we had to go underneath the desk with our gas-masks on.	7:03- 7:14
	<b>Q22. Where did you get your secretarial training?</b>	
	A22. Coatbridge, at Miss Dickson's Commercial College – two elderly ladies!	7:16-7:26
	<b>Q23. How did you feel when victory was declared in 1945 and where were you?</b>	
	A23. Airdrie, I was still there.	7:32-7:35
	<b>Q24. How did you celebrate?</b>	
	A24. Bonfire in the back garden with the neighbours at Airdrie.	7:37-7:42
	<b>Q25. Were there street parties?</b>	
	A25. Yes.	7:45-7:46
	<b>Q26. When you heard about the vacancy at Pennylands Camp 22 was it still called that?</b>	
	A26. No, Pennylands Repatriation Camp, Polish Repatriation Camp.	7:53-8:03
	<b>Q27. Would you talk me through your interview?</b>	
	A27. Can't remember and I can't remember the Adjutant's name.	8:09-8:17
	<b>Q28. Did you sign the Official Secrets Act?</b>	
	A28. I think I did. I did yes.	8:21-8:24

	<b>Q29. How many jobs had been advertised there?</b>	
	A29. Five civilians worked there. Two men and three females.	8:28-8:33
	<b>Q30. What did they do? Same job as you?</b>	
	A30. Just worked as clerks. No, no, the two men that were there were in the Quartermaster's offices dealing with all the soldiers there and army stuff, sorting getting them their clothes for them all, that type of thing, where I was more in charge of overall what I can remember, typed the charge sheets, the British soldiers were forever absent without official leave, or AWOL, and you could here, left, right, left right getting marched into the Adjutant's office –halt! And they got charged for being AWOL and I had all their charge sheets to type up.	8:34-9:23
	<b>Q31. What regiment was that?</b>	
	A31. All different kinds, Black Watch, was one in the office beside me, Green Howards was another, different kinds. I think most of these soldiers would be the ones that would be maybe near the end of the war. If you do 2 years' service... I've a feeling they were involved in that. I don't know, but anyway they did their duty whatever they were asked to do I don't know what they would do. We were never out of the office other than going to the Sergeant's mess for our lunch and then we sat and read the papers and played at shove-ha'penny. And that's what we did.	9:26:10:22
	<b>Q32. Was the Home Guard involved?</b>	
	A32. No	10:24-10:25
	<b>Q33. How did your family feel about you working there?</b>	
	A33. Oh, they were quite happy I got a job near home. That's all they were bothered about.	10:30-10:36
	<b>Q34. Where had you worked previously to that?</b>	
	A34. Well, because of commercial college I started work in an office in Ayr.	10:39-10:48
	<b>Q35. How did you travel back and forward? What time did you start?</b>	
	A35. The bus. Nine o'clock till five	10:51-10:59
	<b>Q36. What were your feelings on the first day at the camp?</b>	

	A36. I just knew it was an army camp, all these Nissen huts and the barricade to get into it. There was a side bit we went in but all the cars had to get the barricade lifted. There was a soldier on guard all the time. I would say security was tight.	11:06-11.29
	<b>Q37. What was the first building you saw?</b>	
	A37. The guard room directly at the front and the soldier posted there. He was the first person I saw. Then the guardroom was just beside him. When you're in an army camp you saw the soldiers there, guarding it with rifles over their shoulder.	11:31-11.52
	<b>Q38. Did somebody escort you to your new post?</b>	
	A38. Can't remember, somebody must have done. Yes, it was one of the men that was employed there phoned me up at Ayr and when I got off the bus at the top of the Barony Road and walked down to the camp he was there and he took me where I had to go for the interview.	11:58-12:19
	<b>Q39. Who was in charge of the camp?</b>	
	A39. Lieutenant Colonel W McFarlane can't remember was in charge, can't remember his regiment, one of the Scottish ones and 2 <sup>nd</sup> in command was the Adjutant but can't remember his name.	12.21-12:37
	<b>Q40. Who did you report directly to?</b>	
	A40. In the office the Adjutant, no, it was the Sergeant Major he was in charge of the office. There were two male workers, two soldiers, and I think they did all the pay-sheets for the British soldiers that was on that side, they did all the pay-sheets in the office he was the overall the SM and next to him was the Adjutant he was overall boss, then the overall boss of us all was the Lieutenant Colonel McFarlane.	12:42-13:16
	<b>Q41. Do you remember the SM's name?</b>	
	A41. No I don't. I was only a child at 17. It was all foreign to me. The army stuff.	13:18-13:29
	<b>Q42. Describe your office.</b>	
	A42. It was quite bare and in the middle of the office was the stove, you know, you lifted off the top and filled it up with coke or whatever went into it. We had an officer, a Polish soldier, who you called a runner and he ran all your messages for you and he used to go up to the cookhouse and bring down a great big jug of tea and cups and he poured out our tea. That's how we got our morning cup of tea, putrid, made with Carnation milk and I didn't like it.	13:31-14.12

	<b>Q43. How many people were in the office?</b>	
	A43. Two soldiers who did the pay sheets, then the Sergeant Major he did different things, me then another girl and next to where I sat at the typewriter was a wee office where the phones were. The telephonists.	14:15-14:48
	<b>Q44. Who were the telephonists?</b>	
	A44. Two fellows from Glasgow, soldiers. I think one was married to an Auchinleck girl. Lafferty or Gaffney, something like that. The other fellow was ginger, we called him Ginger and he borrowed a pound from me to go and get a pair of boots put in to be mended and he was posted away before he got his pay, "I'll get that pound to you." I never got the pound but funnily enough a neighbour of mine was on the train one day going from Cumnock to Glasgow and who should come and sit beside him but this Ginger and he said "Oh, I owe June a pound, she gave me a pound so I could get my boots out the cobblers, I never gave it back to her." But he never gave it to Davie Dick.	14:49-15:50
	<b>Q45. Had everybody been recruited at the same time as you?</b>	
	A45. No. The civilians, you mean? No, they were there before me. I was the last. Isobel my friend, she'd been at this training camp at Irvine and she moved. The rest were all just disbanded, the civilians but she moved. She went into digs at John Allan Drive just where I lived she was there till the end till 1947. She was awful asthmatic. Then of course I got married to my husband and we travelled all over the place.	15:55-16:31
	<b>Q46. Did you meet your husband there?</b>	
	A46. No.	16:32-16.43
	<b>Q47. How long was your contract for?</b>	
	A47. Two years. Then all the soldiers were dismissed as well, sent back to their regiments wherever they were.	16:40-16:50
	<b>Q48. Can you explain what the Polish Resettlement Corps was?</b>	
	A48. No, I don't know anything about them. The only Poles I saw were the officers who came through the orderly room to talk to the Adjutant about matters or the cooks at the cookhouse they were Polish and they just spoke Polish. They weren't good at speaking English. If they did speak English they just stuck to their Polish. You went into the cookhouse, into the dining room there and they spoke Polish.	16:55-17:25

	<b>Q49. No local folk worked there?</b>	
	A49. No.	17:27-17:29
	<b>Q50. Did you speak Polish?</b>	
	A51. No. I had an awful job typing their names, all Ks and Ws and Zs.	17:30-17:40
	<b>Q51. Was there a translator?</b>	
	A51. There would be.	17:44-
	<b>Q52. What was expected of you in your job?</b>	
	A52. To work very quickly, dictated to and didn't stop to breathe because there was loads of soldiers moving out and whenever shipping notice came they got them all I think listed as Nominal Roll they called it and then off they went and I had to type out all their names. Sometimes we were so busy. Me and Isobel my friend were sent through to Edinburgh to the Headquarters there to help out with the typing. We had loads of typing to do, there must have been a lot of people going back too, a lot of Poles in this country and we had that to do. A big Humber car ran us through to Edinburgh and did our typing. Were there for the day and then the Humber car brought us back home. Very busy, very busy camp.	17:51-18:55
	<b>Q53. Was this shipping list the Poles in the Camp?</b>	
	A53. Yes, they were the Poles that were there ready to move out and worked our way through the list. A lot of typing to do.	19:00-19:09
	<b>Q54. What about their families?</b>	
	A54. I think they were down there as well. I would imagine. I never saw any mind you just I know the fact that the soldiers were all gathered. Don't know where the families would be. We weren't allowed down into that part of the camp that was the Polish bit we were up in the British bit.	19:10-19:29
	<b>Q55. The camp was divided into two?</b>	
	A55. Yes.	19:31-19:32
	<b>Q56. Was there a fence round where the Poles were?</b>	




	A56. Yes, barbed wire because it was a prisoner of war camp it was just left the same. The barbed wire was for the POW. The bit we were at with the soldiers looking after the prisoners that's where we were billeted.	19:40-19:56
	<b>Q57. What were the conditions in the Camp?</b>	
	A57. All right, very good couldn't complain about anything.	19:58-20:02
	<b>Q58. Was there running water, electricity?</b>	
	A58. Yes. Inside toilets. Yes.	20:03-20:11
	<b>Q59. Can you describe the Poles' accommodation?</b>	
	A59. Just Nissen huts with single army beds.	29:15-20:22
	<b>Q60. A dormitory?</b>	
	A60. I would expect so. I didn't see them.	20:25-20:28
	<b>Q61. How many would be in the huts?</b>	
	A61. I have no idea. I was never in where the Adjutant was but the other, the Quartermaster's stores offices I started in there to begin with them moved into the Orderly Room. Isobel and I switched jobs I was brought over to the Orderly Room and she was put into the Quartermaster's and the Quartermaster was the officer. The only time we were in his quarters was at Christmas, our first Christmas there he invited us in for a Christmas drink. Now remember we were only 17 and we didn't drink. I always remember it. We sat in his quarters and he would say a gin and tonic for you, June a gin and tonic for you Isobel and we looked at each other, what are we going to do? I remember there was a big pot plant behind my shoulder and every time he came around with gin and tonic as soon as his back was turned I poured my drink into that pot plant and then I heard him saying to his other pal, "June's got hollow legs she's not long in sinking her drinks!" I didn't touch it. I wonder if he ever found out about his plant and if it smelt of gin!	20:33-22:00
	<b>Q62. Where did the Poles eat?</b>	
	A62. In their own quarters, their own dining room.	22:01-22:07
	<b>Q63. Who did their laundry?</b>	
	A63. Don't know. There would be a laundry down there I suppose.	22:09-22:14

	<b>Q64. Were the Poles kept under guard?</b>	
	A64. They could come and go.	22:18-22:23
	<b>Q65. Who guarded them?</b>	
	A65. In the camp, I suppose their own soldiers would be responsible, their own Polish officers and the British officers. They would combine it together. Never had any bother.	22:28-22:43
	<b>Q66. Did some of the Poles want to stay in the UK?</b>	
	A66. No. I think the ones that we had at the camp were all the ones that wanted to go back home. They didn't know what was facing them going back home but they probably had parents and family you know they wanted to go back. I think they knew it was going to be a rough time.	22:50-23:07
	<b>Q67. How were they transported from the camp to their destination?</b>	
	A67. A bus I suppose would take them to Greenock to get their ship, or train I don't know where they'd go.	23:10-23:22
	<b>Q68. How many would you process in a week?</b>	
	A68. Well the list was the list that's what you sent. Everyone on the list was going.	23:33-23:44
	<b>Q69. Did the Polish in camp have a set routine?</b>	
	A69. I imagine they would have. Normal army duties had to be done	23:53-23:58
	<b>Q70. Did they go outside the camp to work?</b>	
	A70. No. There was a Post Office down the camp. That's where the postal van went down. That's where all the mail, everything I typed was taken down to the army camp to the Polish side.	24:00-24:21
	<b>Q71. Were there other nationalities for by the Polish in the camp?</b>	
	A71. When I was there, no.	24:22-24:25
	<b>Q72. Can you tell me more about Lieutenant Colonel McFarlane?</b>	
	A72. He had his own separate quarters. Never mixed with anybody. Don't know much about him.	24:29-24:36

	<b>Q73. How long was he in the camp?</b>	
	A73. He must have been there at the beginning.	24:40-24:43
	<b>Q74. Was he brought in to oversee?</b>	
	A74. Probably. He was the boss.	24:45-24:49
	<b>Q75. Do you know where he served before Pennylands?</b>	
	A75. I have no idea.	24:51-24:53
	<b>Q78. What was he like to work with?</b>	
	A78. He just gave me his letters to do. He was very nice. The only thing is he had a bulldog, a wee bulldog, and I was terrified because every time I had to go up to see him I hoped he'd shut it away out of the road but sometimes it escaped and the soldiers were terrified from it and if you were sitting in your office typing you'd hear the clatter of boots running down and I knew that dog was chasing them to nip their heels! That's all I know about him. They had their own sleeping quarters.	24:54-25:29
	<b>Q79. Where did they eat?</b>	
	A79. I went to the Sergeants' mess and there was a dining room for the ordinary soldiers and they had an officers' mess. They all kept to their own.	25:33-25:45
	<b>Q80. Who cooked for them?</b>	
	A80. I've no idea, it was Polish cooks we had.	25:46-25:51
	<b>Q81. Who did their laundry?</b>	
	A81. Probably the Poles.	25:54-26:00
	<b>Q82. Were the cleaners local?</b>	
	A82. Never saw any cleaners. The soldiers would clean things themselves. It was a proper army camp.	26:03-26:11
	<b>Q83. You ate in the Sergeants' mess?</b>	
	A83. Yes.	26:12-26:13
	<b>Q84. Who supplied the camp with food?</b>	

	A84. The locals. Don't remember any particulars.	26:16-26:21
	<b>Q85. Were there ever any major incidents at the Camp?</b>	
	S85. None.	26:26-26:28
	<b>Q86. When did your employment end?</b>	
	A86. August 2007 [1947] round about there. I think most of the soldiers went about July then we civilians went just after that and moved out. The camp must have closed down, because I left and then I got a job elsewhere.	26:31-26:55
	<b>Q87. Can you describe your last day there?</b>	
	A87. I don't, that's what I'm trying to think, I don't remember anything, when we all left... if you're going tomorrow... it was somebody every different day. We didn't all go at once. "Are you going out tomorrow?" "Aye, I'm going out tomorrow. Nice knowing you." "Bye bye, love" and away they'd go. Every other day there was somebody moving and one by one the office was empty.	26:57-27:23
	<b>Q88. You had another job to go to?</b>	
	A88. Yes. The Coalboard at Lugar and worked there till 1956 till my mother-in-law died.	27:26-27:43
	<b>Q89. Can you sum up what you think was the worst thing about Pennylands Camp?</b>	
	A89. Aye I'll tell you what the worst thing was. The lack of toilets. No proper toilets for the ladies. You'd hope one of the officers let you in to their quarters to get to the toilet. I used to be absolutely desperate to get to the toilet and there was one at the sergeants' mess outside the cookery, the kitchens and I hated going in there because the Poles were right common as muck. Used to laugh and giggle in their own language. They saw you go into the toilet and oh you came back out and....so they could laugh in their own language. I hadn't a clue what they were saying. I hated going up to that toilet but it was the only toilet we had. I used to say to Isobel she was at the Quartermaster's that was a right nice officer and Isobel used his quarters where he had his own toilet but where I was there was no chance to get to the Adjutant's quarters or McFarlane's. No. So, I had to use the one at the cookhouse. I hated it. That was the worst part about it. They didn't provide proper toilet accommodation.	27:50-28:59
	<b>Q90. Can you sum up what you think was the best thing about Pennylands Camp?</b>	

	<p>A90. The friendliness. Everyone was very friendly all the soldiers and the officers especially. Through the Orderly Room to get to the Adjutant's, every one of them had to wait their turn they used to stand over at my desk and          "How are you today, little one?" They used to say.          "Fine, thank you."          "Are you very busy?"          "Yes, very busy" You would be typing away like mad. At least we got away out of the road. The officers were extra nice, these Polish officers and the British officers they really were. In fact, sometimes I had to work on a Saturday. One of the British Officers Captain Henderson Caird [or Kerr?], he's now dead, but he was one of the top gentry that lived down in the south. His car was one of these 2 seaters tied with string nothing but apples lying in the back seat. You had to fling your leg over to get in and he would run me home to Skerrington and drop me off there.          "Bye, bye little girl, see you tomorrow" and away he would go. An awful nice man he was, very la-di-da. I was only a wee lassie of 17. They folk were all older than me. I was just young, Isobel and me, just weans. The only time we thought we were quite grown up was when the officers took us for a drink, the Christmas drink I poured mine into that plant. If my mother would go spare if I went home reeking of drink with gin on my breath. It was a laugh, I don't mind telling you. They used to go to nurses, nurses used to hold dances for them at Ballochmyle Hospital and they used to go to that. The officers were invited over to social events not the Poles, the British officers. One of the fellows that was in the Orderly Room...where I worked...he was hoping to be a concert pianist. Eric Stanier was his name and he took me up into the quarters and he played Chopin on the piano. Oh, see, I was very fond of classical music and Chopin was one of my favourites so he used to tinkle away. I thought          "Oh that's lovely". He said          "If I finish my training and I get booked in at the Royal Albert Hall I'll send you a ticket June with the compliments of me" – and he was the next to go.          "Bye bye, Eric" and away he went. Don't know what happened to him but he was awful good. In Auchinleck then there was Mr McLean the chemist and he lived in a big house on the Barony Road and he knew this Eric Stanier and he used to go over to his house because he had a piano, Mr McLean and he used to go over there and practise his music. I often wondered if that fella got anywhere with his music. He was an awful nice fella, good looking, big strapping fella. Here today, gone tomorrow. It was a happy time, really was, got many a laugh.</p>	29:05-32:55
	<p><b>Q91. That's all my questions. Have I missed anything?</b></p>	
	<p>A91. No. I haven't told you much really, have I? That was my life. One of the fellas that worked on the switchboard in beside me, when he left he took my name and wrote it down in his book and</p>	32:59-33:52

	<p>my age and all about it and when it came to my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and I left there when I had just turned 17. When I was 21 I got a telegram from that fella away down in London to wish me many happy returns for my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. Imagine him remembering that! Some of them were right nice fellas. Folk that just pass in the night and you never see them again. It was good, I enjoyed it.</p>	
	<p><b>Closing statement and end of interview.</b></p>	<p>33:56</p>
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