

**MANX HERITAGE FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

**‘TIME TO REMEMBER’**

**Interviewee(s):** Miss Eva Mary Kane

**Date of birth:** 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1923

**Place of birth:**

**Interviewer(s):** David Callister

**Recorded by:** David Callister

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**Topic(s):** *The Falcon Cliff Hotel*  
Cunningham’s Camp  
TT and Manx Grand Prix  
Schooling and private governess  
WWII  
*The Mannin*  
*The Howstrake Hotel*  
*HMS Valkyrie*  
*The Majestic Hotel*  
‘Quislings’ [Norwegian collaborators]  
Crown Prince Olaf of Norway  
Earl Granville  
Rationing  
Show business career  
Jon Pertwee  
The Manx Operatic Society

**Eva Kane** - Miss K  
**David Callister** - DC

**DC** Now Eva Kane, I know according to Roy Hudd's book on the 'Stars of Variety,' was born in 1923, was he right?

**Miss K** He was – did you have to bring that up?

**DC** What date would that be then?

**Miss K** That was the 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1923.

**DC** Right. Now we need to start talking about your mother and father really because a lot of what they did had a great bearing on the rest of your time, didn't it?

**Miss K** Of course, yes.

**DC** So your mother was Ellen, was she, Ellen Kane?

**Miss K** Yes she was Ellen Kane, but in the hotel business she became known as Kanie and nobody called her anything else.

**DC** And your father was Leo?

**Miss K** My father was Leo.

**DC** Now I think the story we want starts when they bought *The Falcon Cliff Hotel*. What were the circumstances of that?

**Miss K** Well my father had been away during the war years, he was in the RASC and he had been sent out to Africa and he actually got lost there. Through illness his papers went missing. He had smallpox and he was being nursed by the natives and all his paperwork had been lost and mother, in the meantime, was managing a big estate down in Fairbourne, for Sir Peter Peacock, who was the man who started the Peacock's stores. We now have one over here which is rather strange. Sir Peter and mother came over to the Island to have a look at two hotels which mother wanted to have. It was either *Falcon Cliff* or *The Colby Glen* and she decided on *Falcon Cliff*, which was known not as a white castle but a white elephant, nobody had ever been able to make it pay.

**DC** Really?

**Miss K** But it was because you couldn't get to it. You had to walk up Palace Road to get on the one side or on the other side you had to walk up well over a hundred steps, up the side of the cliff, so it wasn't until the 1920s when mother and dad had been in there from 1919, but it certainly wasn't paying, because of the difficulty to get to it.

**DC** It was much easier for the holidaymakers to stay down on the promenade?

**Miss K** Much easier, yes. The only ones we did get were the boys coming from Cunningham's Camp who used to bring the girls from the promenade up to Cunningham's Camp for the dance in the morning and when it came up to lunch time the boys were taking the girls back down the steps to the boarding houses on the promenade for lunch and so they came through the hotel and had a beer on the way which they weren't allowed to have up in Cunningham's Camp of course.

**DC** Right. But it must have been your parents then that organised *The Falcon Cliff Lift*?

**Miss K** Yes, my mother decided that we must have some sort of means of getting the people up to us and it turned out to be this *Wadsworth's* lift, a man from Croydon came over to build the lift, which is classed as a railway because it has a track to it. And from then on the hotel started to pay, mainly because there was a novelty of getting up and down to the hotel by the lift, and also my mother wrote, during the winter months, to thirteen different TT riders' companies and she got thirteen replies and thirteen bookings and that started off a big clientele for the TT races every year and for the Manx Grand Prix. At one point they nearly started from our hotel.

**DC** So I mean she was obviously a woman of foresight who realised that something had to be done to make this place pay then?

**Miss K** Yes, she was a very good businesswoman.

**DC** How much would they have paid for it in 1919, do you know?

**Miss K** It was somewhere round about £250, something as silly as that, because it didn't pay, you know, it was, as I say, a white elephant, and not a white hotel.

**DC** She was determined to make it pay?

**Miss K** Yes she was a very determined lady.

**DC** What was it like at that time then, was it hidden in the trees and so on?

**Miss K** Yes, the trees at the front were very high and we actually had to have them cut down so that the hotel could be seen and there was rather an amusing story of the Governor [who] at that time used to walk from Government House in the morning, come down to the lift, and walk down the steps at the front because of course the lift was only just in the course of being built. He'd walk down the steps at the time and then along the promenade to get to his office and he came down one morning and my father was on the terrace, supervising the trees being cut down and the Governor just looked at my father and said, 'Why are you having these trees cut down, Kane, what kind of trees are they?' And my father, being rather disgruntled at being spoken to in that way said, 'Wooden ones!' and turned round and walked away from him.

**DC** So here we come to the time that you were born in 1923, and that would be when they were still in *Falcon Cliff*?

**Miss K** Oh yes, yes, that was when it was really ...

**DC** It was beginning to work?

**Miss K** Yes, it was beginning to pick up then.

**DC** What are your first memories of it then?

**Miss K** My first memory was standing on the terrace, dressed in a little black bathing costume and I spent the entire summer months on the terrace, and finished up nearly as black, sunburnt, as my swim suit.

**DC** Of course we are told there were endless hot summer days in those days?

**Miss K** Oh, wonderful, you started at Easter and it went on really until the end of September, it was all summer.

**DC** Were they really like that?

**Miss K** They were, they were, really and truly. Wonderful summers.

**DC** And then, so you would have gone to your first school from there, did you?

**Miss K** No, I didn't go to school, I had a governess. The School Board man, as he was known in those days, caught up with me when I was about 5 and came up to *Falcon Cliff* and said to my mother, 'This child should be at school,' and my mother said, 'Well I'm not sending her to school, I'm going to get her a governess,' which she did, and the governess started in the September/October and, whether it was a result of teaching me I don't know but she decided to go home for Christmas to see her sister and during the time that she was home the sister committed suicide and my governess, being so upset about this, also committed suicide.

**DC** Good Lord!

**Miss K** I don't know whether it was as a result of teaching me, which it probably could have been. So of course she never came back.

**DC** So did you get another governess, then?

**Miss K** I did. We had a lady who was a good customer of ours at *Falcon Cliff* and she had been a teacher at St. Mary's for many years. Her husband was a sea-going captain and when she retired from St. Mary's she took me on as a pupil, which was supposed to be until the time that the first governess came back, but of course she never did and so I stayed on with Mrs Edwards, as her name was, until I was nearly twelve years of age. She only taught certain subjects, of course, and one of them, she got me very interested in learning Shakespeare and that was really how I got my first taste of ...

**DC** The drama world?

**Miss K** ... the theatre life, the drama world.

**DC** So here we are then running up in the years towards the Second World War. Now what happened then, what was happening in those years because you

would be enjoying life presumably, were you?

**Miss K** Oh yes, yes.

**DC** Did you have to work in the hotel?

**Miss K** Oh of course, yes. I was working from when I was thirteen. I had had to work before I mean there were many times that I was sent to go down the lift and bring the people up in the lift, and general runabout in the hotel. The grounds of the hotel, on the opposite side of the road, of Palace Road, there were big tennis courts and putting greens, which had been bought by my uncle, and it was run in conjunction with the hotel, so many times I was sent over to take the money for the tennis courts, or to serve the ice creams, or that sort of thing on the sports grounds.

**DC** You had a lot of work to do during the summer then.

**Miss K** Oh yes, yes. I had to work all the year round, in the winter I was set on with a paint brush and a can of paint and we did all our own decorating, because in those days you couldn't afford to pay decorators, you had to do it yourself.

**DC** Well then we are coming towards the Second World War, the threat of war was coming in, the hoteliers must have known this – they must have known that their living was under threat.

**Miss K** Well we knew because we had five officers came over to stay at *Falcon Cliff* in the March of 1939. They were all in mufti so of course we didn't know who they were at first, and they were here to take over Cunningham's Camp to become a naval establishment and they liked what they saw and, because we were adjacent to Cunningham's, we were taken over for the officers and we were told that in the event of war being declared we must empty the hotel within twenty-four hours, and within twenty-four hours the ships came into the bay with the naval officers and the little boys for *HMS St. George*, as Cunningham's Camp became.

**DC** Was *The Falcon Cliff Hotel* then commandeered by the services, you might say, and all other business ruled out?

**Miss K** No, the hotel was commandeered by the Navy, but we were allowed to keep the bars open, but we weren't allowed to take civilian visitors.

**DC** So what sort of money would they pay you then, was it equivalent to what you had been paid during the holiday period?

**Miss K** Nothing like, no. Mind you the hotel charges in those days were pretty ridiculous.

**DC** What would the holidaymakers be paying?

**Miss K** The holidaymakers would be paying 8s 6d, 9s 6d, and 10s 6d and that was for your room, breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, late dinner and supper.

**DC** Amazing, isn't it?

**Miss K** Ridiculous, isn't it?

**DC** So they didn't pay anything like that, the Services?

**Miss K** No, they started off somewhere about 3s 6d for each officer, which was stupid, and by the end of the first year so many of the wives had been brought over and the officers had gone out into their own homes with their wives, and we were trying to keep the hotel open for about seven or eight naval officers and of course we were running at a terrible loss. So mother decided one day that enough was enough and she put on her best smile and her best mood and up she went to Cunningham's Camp to see Captain Duke, who was in charge there, to tell him that we were closing the hotel down and he said, 'Oh you can't do that, you've got our officers in there.' So mother said, 'Nothing in the world will make me stay open to run at a loss for five or six officers, I'm very sorry, but you must allow us to take other people in.' So very grudgingly he gave us notice that we could take other people in and the first lot of people that we took in were the officers who were in charge of the Internment Camps and we had their headquarters staff and had to provide a second Mess for them because the Navy and the Army couldn't work together, they had to be separate and that went on for several months until one day my mother said enough is enough and we are closing this down and the Army officers that we had with us took it over, requisitioned it to become an Internee hospital and we then moved to *Mannin* in

Marathon Road to take the army officers and make a Mess for them.

**DC** So you were still doing the same thing but in a different location?

**Miss K** Still doing the same thing but in a different location and the army took us over and that was that, we lost the Navy then.

**DC** So *The Falcon Cliff* then, they would take that lock, stock and barrel, furniture, everything then?

**Miss K** Everything as it stood.

**DC** With the bars and all the stock, and all that?

**Miss K** No, that all had to be transferred, yes. But we went into this private house with the headquarters staff and we were there for two months and it wasn't working out very happily for us. My mother had developed into the cook, my father had developed into the boots and I had developed into the jack of all trades, as I always had been. I took mother down to town one morning, we had a car for shopping for the officers, and we drove down into town and my mother heard that *Howstrake Hotel*, *The Golf Links Hotel*, had that morning been put on the market to be sold. We got back into the car, we drove straight up to *Howstrake*, looked it over, and by 1 o'clock when we went back to *Mannin*, my father said, 'Where ever have you been for this length of time? The officers are waiting for their lunch,' and he was up the wall, and we said, 'We've bought an hotel.' So after we'd brought *him* round from collapsing – we told the army officers as well that we had taken this hotel, that mother and dad were going up to run *Howstrake* and I was to stay on and run the Officers' Mess for them, which we did for another couple of months and by November the Colonel Baggeley, who was in charge of the internees, said, 'Well, why are we living here and your mother and father living up at *Howstrake*, why don't we [unclear], which we did and closed down *Mannin* and it was de-requisitioned.

**DC** So we're in, this is just after, this is around the 1940s period of time, is it, or a little after that?

**Miss K** Yes, before Christmas.

**DC** Right. So, I mean *The Howstrake Hotel* couldn't have been taking people in then and through the war, or could it?

**Miss K** Oh yes, we were one of the few hotels that were open all through the war and eventually we had such a big clientele that we had people sleeping out all round the village and coming in to the hotel for their meals and the amenities of the hotel.

**DC** So this was a sort of stroke of genius to have gone off and bought this then?

**Miss K** Oh yes, but that was my mother. She was just brilliant, a brilliant businesswoman, she was.

**DC** But what sort of people were staying there during the war then?

**Miss K** We had quite a lot of people who had come from the Channel Islands, they had escaped, and everyone of them had escaped on the last boat.

**DC** So are we talking about sort of permanent residents?

**Miss K** Yes, they became permanent residents ...

**DC** Because there would have been no tourists, would there?

**Miss K** No, very few, there were some. The people that we got as tourists were mainly Blackpool hoteliers who had been working hard all year round and they wanted a break and they used to come over to us. We had a very big clientele from Blackpool and they were the people who slept out all round through the village because we had so many of the service people.

**DC** Because pretty well all the promenade hotels would have been requisitioned in one form or another in any case?

**Miss K** They were, yes. *The Villiers* block was for the 166 OCTU and the two blocks from *The Regent Hotel* along to *The Granville*, that was a shore establishment, *HMS Valkyrie*. There was quite an amusing story about that on one occasion. They had a barrier built out into the middle of the promenade where the tramlines are now and the sailors from *The Valkyrie* used to congregate there in the

mornings and the officers came out and they were all drilled and all this kind of thing and given their orders for the day and of course we had blackout over here and on one occasion a car going along the promenade pretty late at night banged into this barrier and broke down quite a few of the pieces of the barrier in front of *The Regent Hotel* and it was duly noted in the ship's log that the ship had been torpedoed!

**DC** Isn't that wonderful!

**Miss K** It was really quite funny, it gave everybody a laugh over here, you know, because these things, you had to lighten the load of what we were going through, although of course we never suffered over here like they did in England. We didn't have the bombing and that sort of thing but we did see, on one occasion, when Liverpool was being so very heavily hit, we could see the fires from the terrace at *Falcon Cliff*. And a little bit later on I joined the Red Cross and did part time nursing at *The Majestic Hotel* which was by this time an Army RAMC hospital for the soldiers on the Island and I worked there as a nurse.

**DC** But presumably you still had to help your mother and father at *Howstrake*, did you?

**Miss K** Oh yes, I worked in the hotel in between times and together with one or two other girls, Beryl Hardy, as she was then, was another person who helped to teach the little sailor boys. In the *Palace Ballroom* we ran a little dancing school there to teach the boys how to dance. So we all had many different jobs that we did during the war. But it was all pretty well war work.

**DC** Didn't you have an important royal visitor at *Howstrake*?

**Miss K** We did indeed. The Onchan camp at that time was being run for, not internees, but detainees, and these were the likes of the Norwegians who had escaped from Norway and had come into the British Isles and they came to Onchan camp to be told, so that we could find out whether they were genuine detainees or whether they were 'Quislings.'

**DC** The 'Quislings' were collaborators, weren't they, Norwegian originally.

**Miss K** Yes, yes. They were collaborators and they had to be sorted out here so the soldiers looking after the detainees just until it was sorted out whether they were genuine or not, they carried guns, but no ammunition, so we were able to go down to the camp, to this internee camp, detainee camp, rather, and we did little cabarets for them, that sort of thing.

**DC** Oh did you?

**Miss K** And on one occasion, because they were mainly Norwegian, we had a visit from the Crown Prince of Norway, Crown Prince Olaf, as he was then. He actually became King afterwards. And because we used to do dances in *Howstrake Hotel* for the soldiers of the camp, the officers came up to us and asked us would we do a special luncheon party for the Crown Prince of Norway, which of course we said we would be delighted to do this meal. But we then found out that it was on a date when we had a very, very big wedding for one of the Kirkpatrick family, which was being done in their own home in Springfield.

**DC** So you'd be catering for it?

**Miss K** So we were doing the catering for it and to cut a very long story short it was decided that we could do the wedding, but that we had to come back for lunch at *Howstrake* to provide this lunch for the Crown Prince of Norway and Earl Granville and his good lady, who was the Queen's sister, and so it was all arranged.

**DC** Granville being the Governor, of course?

**Miss K** Granville was the Governor at that time. And we made them promise that they would be at *Howstrake* prompt at 1 o'clock for their luncheon because we had this very big wedding at half past two down at Springfield. And just as the Crown Prince and the Governor, Earl Granville, were coming out of Government House to come down to us, Earl Granville fell flat on his face in a muddy puddle outside Government House. So the Crown Prince said, 'Oh you must go back in and get cleaned up,' and Earl Granville said, 'Oh I can't do that because we have promised to be at *The Howstrake* at a certain time because the Kanes have got a very big wedding on.' So the two officers, the police officers, were sent down in advance to *Howstrake* to ask us to have cleaning materials ready to clean up Earl Granville, who was coming down covered in mud and

when he arrived of course we duly had all the brushes and towels and things ready to clean up Earl Granville to go into his lunch with the Crown Prince. The two officers, the two police officers, who were very well known on the Island at that time as the heavenly twins ...

**DC** What would they be, CID, would they?

**Miss K** Yes, yes. Gale and Lowey, their names were. They came down as advance party, as I've said, and we then told them, at least mother told them, 'Your table is in the corner of the lounge for you to have your lunch and you will kindly disregard everything you are given to eat, because otherwise you will be taking us away to incarcerate us for the rest of the war!' for serving food that we weren't allowed to serve.

**DC** Because this was a very severe rationing time, wasn't it?

**Miss K** It was, very severe rationing, but when all said and done, you don't get the chance of feeding a Crown Prince every day. So they were given a lunch which started off with a starter, which I can't remember what it was now. The second course was chicken and ham and salads, which of course you weren't allowed to put chicken with ham, or ham with chicken – it had to be one or the other. But they were served chicken and ham and all the salads, followed by ice cream and fruit with it. Which again was against the law, but which these two policemen sat and thoroughly enjoyed and we weren't taken away at the end of the lunch.

**DC** Right.

**Miss K** But we were introduced to the Crown Prince who thanked us for doing this special meal for them. Later, many years later, when the Crown Prince revisited the Island for the *Millennium*, he asked to be introduced once more to anyone he had met on his first visit as Crown Prince, but now of course he was King and we were taken to Government House through Fenella's finding us and taking us up there, and we were introduced once more to King Olaf who thanked us and asked us were we still in *Howstrake Hotel*, but as mother and dad were close on ninety at that time, we said no, that they had retired, but it was a wonderful honour to be introduced once more to the Crown Prince, now King.

**DC** Putting aside that menu for that day then, that special day with the Crown Prince, you must have had to have, I mean how were you able to feed those people who stayed in the hotel, did they have to produce ration books as well.

**Miss K** Oh yes, yes, the food was rationed over here, but never as strong as it was in England.

**DC** You could get things, could you?

**Miss K** We could get things, you could get bacon, and you could sell bacon and egg, you know, for breakfast, which you weren't supposed to do. Eggs in England, if you got one a month you were lucky. Our visitors had them every morning.

**DC** So was it black market, or a grey market or a white market or what, would you say?

**Miss K** Well I always referred to my mother as 'Mrs Black' of Black's Market because she seemed to find everything that was totally unobtainable for anybody else.

**DC** Well let's have some other memories of those *Howstrake* years then. Did you get VIPs coming over in those years?

**Miss K** Oh yes, there was a lot of people came over and at that time Earl Granville was the Governor here and we had a snooker exhibition and Joe Davis came over to give this exhibition and he was to play the Governor. So it was a wonderful evening there with him playing the Governor, playing Earl Granville. And another episode was that the Governor was actually made Earl Granville while he was living over here, he was promoted to the Earl, and as such his son became Lord and he came into the bar on one occasion, Lord Cheney, he came into the bar and he said, 'I wonder if I can borrow Eva's microphone and amplifier, we're having a dance up at Government House?' So while he was waiting for us to get this ready to take, standing in the bar he looked up at one of the fixtures and he saw a bottle there and he said, 'Mr Kane, is that green chartreuse?' and dad said, 'Yes it is,' so Dad got the bottle down and showed it to him and he said, 'I don't suppose you'd sell this to me would you?' He said, 'The old lady loves this,' the old lady being the Queen's sister, Countess Granville ...

**DC** Right.

**Miss K** ... so he took this chartreuse home to Government House for the old lady, Countess Granville.

**DC** This of course is a time when, we've spoken before about rationing and so on, but what about the drinks at the bar, did you have difficulty getting it, was beer rationed, could people come and have beer and spirits and so on?

**Miss K** We never actually ran out of anything but whisky and gin and that sort of thing, spirits, were not terribly plentiful.

**DC** No, no.

**Miss K** Not terribly plentiful at all. We always managed, because there were a lot of hotels of course that were closed so over here we did not have any great shortage.

**DC** So the breweries had to have an outlet somewhere?

**Miss K** Yes, and of course we were a free house so we got more or less what we wanted.

**DC** That was good, right. Well how long then did you stay at *Howstrake*, or your parents stay with *Howstrake*.

**Miss K** Until 1959.

**DC** And what happened at that time, were they retiring then?

**Miss K** We'd been there, well mother and dad were both in their seventies by this time and they were retiring. They sold the hotel once, they sold the ingoing and we still owned the grounds and the hotel, actually, but the people that went in didn't make a go of it and we had to put the Receivers in and then we went back in to manage it for ourselves and then when it got round to being in their seventy, about seventy-five, they sold it. They sold it to Alf Robertson and he changed the name of the hotel, which was fatal and eventually I got a telephone call very early one morning to look out of the window and see the sky lit up,

that the hotel was burning down and then of course it was re-built after that and sold on to one and another, but we actually owned it when it was burned down, which was soul-destroying.

**DC** Oh really, yes of course.

**Miss K** Yes, we'd lost the one hotel through the war and now we lost this one through it being burnt down and later, of course, *Falcon Cliff* burnt down.

**DC** You're right. Now, you mentioned to me putting on entertainments during those years, was this when you were learning to do your whistling and singing, and I mean were you doing that in the Isle of Man at that time?

**Miss K** I was doing whistling, I was doing dancing.

**DC** Tell me how you started this whistling?

**Miss K** Well it started actually through Harriet Hart, who was one of Doris Lowthian's pupils, she became pupil teacher and eventually she married Harold Moorhouse, who had the band at *The Palais*, and Harriet used to do a lot of whistling, and it rather intrigued me so one day I thought, oh, I'll see if I can do that and found I could and so it just went on from there. So I was now dancing and whistling and acting and eventually I had, a lady came over from London to be a patient at Dr Cannon's and she was one of the main people from Ivor Novello's shows, she was a very beautiful, tall, elegant lady and she played the grand duchesses in all his shows and she saw me in the play at *The Gaiety* with the Rep [Repertory] Company and asked who I was and all about me and I went down to *The Falcon Hotel* to let her have a talk with me and to see what I could do other than act and she found out that I could do my whistling and dancing and everything. By the way Frieda Standen played for me for this audition that I did for Chardy. And as a result of that Margery Chard, who was the lady in question, took me to the theatrical people in London, who were doing the big pantomimes all round the country and by staying in and out of the office, day in and day out, we finally got this poor man so worn down that he gave me the part of 'Fairy,' a rather substantial fairy I might say. I was to play 'Fairy' in the pantomime at the *Sheffield Lyceum* that winter, which was Howard and Wyndham's theatre and the people that I was with was Frankie Howard in his first pantomime, Bunny Doyle who was a very well-known artist at that time, he was playing Dame for

the first time. Frankie was playing Simple Simon for the first time, Marian Gordon, who was one of Ivor Novello's people, was playing Principal Boy for the first time, Margery Russell was playing Principal Girl for the first time and Eva Kane was playing 'Fairy' for the first time. And it was an extremely successful pantomime in *Sheffield Lyceum* and we ran for, I think it was fifteen weeks, because pantomimes don't do that now.

**DC** So that was the start of your show-biz career?

**Miss K** That was the start of me really doing things.

**DC** But before that you were in more than one dramatic company in the Island, weren't you?

**Miss K** Oh yes, I started off in the 'Unnamed' dramatic society ...

**DC** Wait a minute, 'Unnamed'?

**Miss K** 'Unnamed', yes, it really got to be known as 'Unashamed' at one point in the proceedings. That was started by Jimmy Onley, who was over here at that time. We've just had a visit in the Island from his son, who's an artist in Canada now. From the 'Unnamed' there was the British Legion, and I was invited by Sylvia Bailey, who was their leading lady at the time, she had seen me in Rep [Repertory] in *The Gaiety* and she asked me to come and join the Legion Players and take part in a show that they were doing that year which was 'Jane Steps Out.' Sylvia was playing the lead, and we rehearsed for several weeks and then one day we got in for rehearsal and we learned the dreadful news that Sylvia had died very suddenly and as the play had, by then, got too far on to be cancelled they were moving us all round – they asked me to take over Sylvia's part, but I said no, I wasn't sufficiently experienced at that time to carry a leading part, so I played the second lead, which actually turned out to be a jolly sight better than the first lead in the end.

**DC** Good part?

**Miss K** Wonderful part, yes, in 'Jane Steps out' with Harry Radcliffe and two sisters, Edith and Hilda Hussey, who played the other sisters in the play and it was a very, very successful play, and following that I went on with the Service

Players, which of course had been started by Jon Pertwee, in the war years, and I joined them on the second year for 'Jane Steps Out' and I think I'm now one of the longest living members of the Service Players.

**DC** Yes – were they happy times with the Service Players?

**Miss K** Oh, wonderful, wonderful. We had, as I say we had Jon Pertwee and we had Vera Standen, we had Olga Cowell and all the people who were the 'tops' in the Island, you know, we all belonged to this Society, which is still going, of course.

**DC** Of course, and he came back several times and he was always very pleased to be back to remember the Service Players?

**Miss K** Oh yes, he used to come over, Olga Cowell kept in touch with him of course and so did Vera Standen and they always let him know of any shows that we were doing?

**DC** Was he at that time then, was he having to dash backwards and forwards to do radio broadcasts, or was he purely, simply a serviceman?

**Miss K** No he was a serviceman at that time, the actual radio thing started later on.

**DC** So the Service Players, I mean did you do many shows with them, many plays?

**Miss K** Yes, I have done a lot with them, I think my last one was about seven or eight years ago. But I was away then ...

**DC** Doing your professional career.

**Miss K** Doing my professional career but when I came home, if I was home for a few months, I still went in and did parts with the Service Players which I enjoyed greatly.

**DC** There's been a tradition in the Isle of Man of one group breaking off from another group and arguments coming up and some other groups starting, and breakaway groups and that sort of thing. There's been a chequered history I suppose, hasn't there?

**Miss K** There has really, yes and then of course a few years, well a few years ago I say, when I come to think of it it's well over thirty years ago, when the Manx Operatic were doing 'Call me Madam,' and apparently they'd chosen this play and had said they were going to produce it, it had been in the papers and everything else and they hadn't got anybody to play the lead and at the time I was in *The Manx Arms* in Onchan and they came up and asked me would I play the part and I had to say no and I kept refusing because I didn't think the brewery would like me taking the time off. Anyhow they did give me time off and so I then became a member of the Operatic Society and played the lead for them in 'Call me Madam,' which was a wonderful experience and I enjoyed it even more for the fact that I was actually doing something like this for the first time on the Island to show what I could do, which a lot of people had not actually seen me working professionally, so they didn't know.

**DC** No, of course. And when we were talking of your act as a whistler, earlier, you must have been then, when you were doing the Variety halls, variety shows, about the only woman in the British Isles who incorporated whistling into an act.

**Miss K** Yes, Ronnie Ronalde, of course, was the main person that was doing the whistling in those days, but I was the only, there had been another woman, but I don't remember who she was, but I think she'd finished before I started and then of course when I started to sing as well, so that spun out the act; I was then doing acting, singing, dancing and whistling, so I could go into many different productions that otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do.

**DC** Yes, yes. How many years would you have done like those variety shows then, probably from after the war then?

**Miss K** Yes, yes, from the 1940s and then I did two or three seasons at Onchan *Pavilion*.

**DC** Did you?

**Miss K** Yes, I did one season with Jack Edge, who was the comedian there, he was a very, very well-known comedian in his day and I did my singing and my dancing and also was in some of the sketches with Jack Edge, you know, as the feed, and a little spin off from that was that we had – a man came over to stay at

*Howstrake* at the hotel and he was a man named Richard Afton, who was a BBC producer and did a lot of these television shows and he came down and saw our show at Onchan *Pavilion* which, by this time, was run by Terry Cantor and his wife Dell, and he saw us performing there and he took the whole show, lock, stock and barrel, to London.

**END OF INTERVIEW**