**Bob Mackenzie – Background**

BM: This is the 18th of March 2014.

**Bob explains the origin of the Kindertransport Movement**

The British Parliament was approached by the ‘Movement for the Care of Children of Germany’ to hasten the travel permits. The movement promised to fund the whole of the operation and stated that they would not be a drain on the public purse. The funds were to be found to guarantee £50.00 (roughly £1000.00 in today’s money) for every child brought to this country by Kindertransport. By the time the war started in September ’39 it is estimated that 10,000 children were brought to safety in this country. Therefore a very generous British public donated the sum of £500,000.00, equivalent to approximately £10, 000 000.00 in today’s money. Considering that the average wage at that time was under £3.00 per week, this was a truly momentous fundraising exercise.

Now you can understand why I title this talk – ‘Kinder – Britain’s Generosity’. Many of the children who came over on the Kindertransport have a story to tell and I tell the story of one such child, me. It’s the story I know best.

**Bob Mackenzie – Life Before the War**

I was born in the town of Chemnitz in South East Germany. I do not recollect my very early years but in 1933 my father lost his job in Chemnitz and we moved to a small town called Neukirchen, about five miles from Chemnitz. My parents bought a semi-detached house with a large piece of ground attached, probably about one and a half acres. As I remember my father took on any type of work available: driving, painting, road building etc and life for my sister and I was quite normal. Our household consisted of my paternal grandfather, my father, my mother, my sister and myself. On our piece of ground we kept a goat which supplied milk, we kept hens which supplied the eggs and while my father was working my mother and grandfather worked on our land. We grew our own vegetables and had an orchard with various fruit trees.

Below our house was a deep cellar and I can remember my mother storing the apples and pears in the cellar for winter use. Although my grandfather was Jewish I cannot remember him attending any Jewish religious service. My father was also Jewish but my mother was of the Lutheran faith and my sister and I were brought up also in the Lutheran faith. We were regular attendees at the church every Sunday but unfortunately because of my father’s Jewish background the whole family was classified as Jewish by the Nazi regime, even though my mother had never embraced the Jewish religion. At five years old I went to the local school. I never experienced any feeling of being an outsider. I played with the lads of my own age; they came to my house to play and I went to theirs. I may be wrong but I think we were the only Jewish family in the town and no one appeared to bother.

One day we came home from school to find my father gone. My mother didn’t say where he had gone to and about two or three months later he appeared again, only then did my sister and I find out that he had been away to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Why, we did not know… On reflection and on information gathered during research for this talk it seems possible that my father was one of the many Jews who had been rounded up during Kristallnacht. Not long after my father returned, my sister and I were told we would be going on a journey. My mother packed a suitcase for each of us and we were taken to the railway station to be put on a train.

**Bob Mackenzie – Immigration**

Bob mentions what he can remember of his journey to Britain and his arrival in Selkirk. He goes on to describe his first introduction to the Mackenzie family of Forres.

BM: I’m not sure where we joined the train and to this day I have never found out. Unfortunately there is a complete blank from the time we were put on the train until we arrived at The Priory in Selkirk. I’ve been told since, this is possibly the only way a child of eight years old could cope with the trauma of this upheaval. To suddenly be torn from a happy, comfortable family life with loving parents, put on a train to nowhere and end up in a country where no one spoke my language, except the other children travelling with me, must have been a severe shock to a young child.

I know we landed at Harwich on the 16th of March 1939 because that is the date stamped on my Kinderausweis, the travel permit used by the Burgermeister [Mayor} of Neukirchen on the 13th of March 1939. That same permit also described me as ‘staatenlos’ which means stateless. Germany got rid of me and didn’t want me back.

After some weeks at The Priory at Selkirk my sister and I packed our belongings and went on another train journey accompanied by two ladies from the ‘Refugee Movement’. We eventually arrived at the station at Forres, Morayshire. We didn’t know it but we were to be placed with the family Mackenzie. We found out many years later that the Mackenzie family had originally applied to take refugees from the Spanish Civil War and being told they had all been allocated families and there were child refugees from Germany looking for accommodation they agreed to take my sister and I, as my mother had asked, if possible, that we should be kept together.

On arrival at Forres two strange occurrences took place which have never been explained. On getting off the train I walked through all the people on the platform, straight over to Agnes Mackenzie, one of the daughters of the family. No one in the family had ever been to Selkirk, and yet I somehow knew that this was the person who had come to meet us. The second strange thing that happened was also puzzling… Mr Mackenzie had a car to take us to his home. On arriving the car stopped outside a small shop with a gate on either side leading into gardens. When I stepped out of the car I did not try to enter any of these two gates but walked approximately fifty or sixty yards up the road and entered the correct gate of Mr Mackenzie’s house. How I knew it was his gate to enter I still have no idea.

**Bob Mackenzie – Settling In**

Bob describes his new family, the Mackenzies, and their efforts to get his parents out of Germany.

BM: Mr Mackenzie’s house consisted of the main house and a small attached cottage. The Mackenzie family were made up of Granny Mackenzie, Mr Mackenzie (a widower) and three daughters; Agnes, Janet and Jessie. The family lived in the big house and my sister and I were accommodated in the cottage with either Janet or Jessie living in it to look after us. We settled in very quickly and were treated as part of the family. Agnes was a nurse in the hospital in Elgin and Janet and Jessie looked after the house. Though my sister and I did not speak English we managed, with the help of a dictionary, to understand the basics. On the other hand if we were told to do something which we did not want to do we were very adept at saying, “Me no speak English”.

As we settled in and began to learn more and more of the language we discovered this ploy did not work so well. We wrote letters to our parents and got letters back. My mother was using a dictionary to write to the Mackenzie family and we kept in touch until the war broke out. It was only years later, when we were older, that we discovered that correspondence had been passing between Mr Mackenzie, The Refugee Movement and The Home Office to try and get our parents out of Germany to join us. Unfortunately the formalities had not been completed by the time war broke out in September 1939. Many years later, when the correspondence between Mr Mackenzie, The Refugee Movement and The Home Office was passed to me for safekeeping, I discovered some nameless civil servant in The Home Office had kept the documentation on his desk for seven weeks before applying.

I often wonder if that seven weeks could have made the difference between my parents joining us over here and remaining in Germany all through the war. **Bob Mackenzie – Life During the War**

Bob loses his German but becomes proficient in English.

BM:Once the war started we were only allowed to write twenty-five words per month through the Red Cross. When war broke out Janet joined the Land Army and Jessie looked after the house. So over the years one can say that Jessie virtually brought us up. Granny Mackenzie died and my sister and I moved into the big house and we were accepted as part of the family. Mr Mackenzie arranged for us to attend the local school. He asked the Headmaster if it would be possible to have two or three hours a week with the German class, so we could keep up our German language, but the Headmaster refused. So the German language faded away through lack of use.

When I moved to secondary school I decided to take German as a language and I’m sorry to say I ended up bottom of the class; mockery all round from the other members of the class. But the following year I got my own back by coming first in my class in English.

**Bob Mackenzie – Integration**

Bob starts work and moves to Renfrew as an apprentice mechanical engineer. He changes his name to Mackenzie to thank the family who rescued his sister and him.

He learns about the survival of his parents and the death of his grandfather. He marries and then joins the RAF. He describes his mother’s first visit to Scotland from communist East Germany.

BM: After leaving school I started my apprenticeship with a local electrical contractor. In 1948 The Refugee Council, who were my legal guardians, decided to move me to Glasgow. By this time Agnes and Janet were both married, Jessie was about to get married and Mr Mackenzie was going to move to Motherwell to live with Janet and her husband.

I couldn’t find a firm to complete my electrical apprenticeship in the Glasgow area so I started my apprenticeship all over again in a shipyard in Renfrew as a mechanical engineer. After about a year, I went for an interview with an electrical contractor in Paisley and was accepted to complete my electrical apprenticeship. It was during this time that I was given the chance to apply for British citizenship. I applied in March 1949 and my citizenship was finally authorised in February 1950. Once that was approved I decided to change my name as well; my name was Eberhard Rosenberg (mount of roses) and the Scottish equivalent would have been Montrose but after kindness shown to my sister and I over the past years I decided to thank Mr Mackenzie by adopting his name as he had no sons of his own to carry his name forward.

After the war we were overjoyed to discover that my parents had survived the war. My father and grandfather had both been taken away to concentration camps and, although my father survived, unfortunately my grandfather did not. My parents had been ejected from their home and my mother survived the war living with friends and relations. At the end of the war the Russian forces controlled the area where my parents lived and when the authorities discovered that my parents had been ejected they, in turn, ejected the German family who had moved in and the house was restored to my parents. My father tried to persuade me to come back to Germany but after being used to the freedom in this country and hearing of the tightly controlled life under the communist regime we decided not to return to Germany. Being in a Russian zone my parents were not allowed to travel to the West.

By this time I had met my future wife and we got married in November 1952. Shortly after this I was called up for National Service.

I went in to the RAF, in married quarters and…oh aye, got a letter from my mother saying she was coming to visit us in the married quarters and we went down to Kidderminster to meet her at the train and we sat there for a couple of hours, still nobody there, and we came back to the camp. And next door to us in the quarters was a sergeant who was married to a German woman who was interested in meeting my mother. When we returned home they asked us in for a cup of coffee and we talked about what could have happened to my mother.

And then there was a knock at the door and a gentleman asked if anyone knew where the people next door were as a lady wanted to see them. It turned out to be my mother. Someone on the train had told her it would be better getting off at Bridgenorth instead of Kidderminster and didn’t realise that we were waiting at Kidderminster. She got off the train, no idea how to get there, made a few questions in her halting English and started to walk it, not realising it was three miles to the camp and a December day. Anyway, this gentleman stopped and got her up to the house and that’s when we took her next door and I raked up the fire after dampening it down and the chimney went up in fire. So, as I said, the RAF married quarters have an RAF Fire Service and their idea of a chimney fire is ladder against the roof, hose down the chimney and turn on the water.

It was very effective but as you can imagine, the mess down below…So after we started to clean up. My wife was going to help but my mother said “No, no, no. Setzen sie, setzen sie” (Sit down) and her and I, after…it must have been seventeen/eighteen years since we had seen each other, spent the first hour together on hands and knees on the floor cleaning up the mess! What a reunion! Anyway, after we had cleaned up the mess there we asked how on earth she had managed to get out and that’s when she explained. Now I think it was…who was it she went to see? Permission to visit her brother, her brother in Köln. She got permission from the Russian authorities to visit her brother and when she went there he took her up to the Burgermeister and, as I say, the Burgermeister there issued the passports.

So he gave her a West German passport, took her East German passport and said when you come back give me back the West German passport, I’ll give you back the East German passport and no one is any the wiser. And that’s what happened. But as I say, we got her home, up north to meet some of the family and meet my sister in Glasgow but she wouldn’t take any photos home with her. It was… I think it was fear of the authorities; the travel restrictions were so tight, you know. And eventually…well many years later…I’ll come to it later. Many years later my father did manage to come out.

But to carry on with the story…After three years in the forces I was demobbed and found it difficult to settle down. I had several jobs then joined the government service. We were writing regularly to my parents and in ’56 my wife and I decided she should go and visit my parents with their first grandchild.

We reckoned as they had missed out on their own children growing up they should at least see their grandchildren. The arrangements were made and money was tight; the most economical form of transport was to go by train. So my wife went first to stay with my sister in Blackpool and my sister accompanied her to London and from there it was by train to Dover, then the ferry and by train to Köln where she spent the night with friends of my parents. The following day on the train again to Magdeburg on the border between East and West Germany where my father met her; he worked with the railways in East Germany. When you think it is quite a journey with an eighteen-month-old child and a woman on her own. You know, they weren’t quite as sophisticated as they are nowadays, you know. And my wife and son stayed for a period of six weeks.

When she came back and told me about the restrictions imposed over there, I was glad I had not gone back home after the war, as my father had wanted. On arrival at my parents’ house she had to sign the book at the house listing all the visitors, then go to the police station to register her arrival and inform them of her length of stay. And my parents told her to be sure to keep sufficient English money to pay for her exit visa as you cannot pay for that in German money.

INT: And why did you decide not to go with her?

BM: Well I couldn’t go because I was working with government service and the work I was doing was restricted, security was quite high. And then of course they were in the Russian zone so there was no way I could go to a communist country, working for the British government.

Right… And there was also…the other fault, was there was a possibility they were looking for technical personnel, if I’d gone there I might never have got back out again.

INT: But you were a British citizen by that time?

BM: Only in the British Commonwealth. If you go back to your country of birth, never mind the Kinderausweis ‘staatenlos’. As far as the Russians were concerned – they won the war, they’ll dictate…he’s a German, he’s a German – he stays here. Right? That was it. So the British citizenship, I mean it tells you on the documentation that I’ve got ‘Valid, except in the country of my birth.’

INT: That’s interesting.

INT: Yes it is.

BM: You see? So you’ve got to be careful with these little, all these little quirks upset you. Anyway…while living in Beith in Ayrshire we got word that my father had retired and that his travel restrictions no longer applied. So in the summer of ’58 my mother and my father came to visit us. It was only now that my mother told my father she’d been to see us. At first he wouldn’t believe it but when he saw the photos of us together he had no choice. He had to believe it, you know. The reason my mother had not told him was she was so frightened it would slip out accidentally and they would both be punished for breaking the travel regulations imposed by the East German Authorities. That was the last time I saw my parents. As a government employee with a high security clearance, I was not permitted to travel to a communist controlled country. Both my parents passed away in ‘68.

**Bob’s first return to Germany**

In ’74 my wife and I took our first trip back to the country of my birth. Due to my government service it was impossible for us to cross over to communist controlled East Germany to visit the home I was brought up in. We toured West Germany, calling on friends stationed there in the forces. Prior to going over we had been in touch with my mother’s sister, who was a governess in Dresden. She was a… I suppose child-minder is as good an explanation as any. A painter there, a widower, who had seven children, she looked after them. Now, during her working days she had been housekeeper and nanny for the widower with seven children. Now living in Rendsburg…one of the children, Maria, was now living in Rendsburg in West Germany. So it was arranged that we would go up to Rendsburg and visit Maria and my aunt would come from East Germany to visit Maria…

it was a good excuse ,’one of my children’, you know. When we arrived in Rendsburg we found Aunt Gertrude was waiting for us; that was our first meeting in thirty-five years. Just imagine it. At great risk to herself she smuggled out my father’s watch to bring to me. This was a watch that my grandfather had given to my father and my father had promised me ‘You come back to Germany and it’s yours’.

INT: Ah!

BM: I wouldn’t go back to Germany so he kept it but Aunt Gertrude got it and she smuggled it out for me. I’ve still got it yet. It was hidden all during the war by my mother. In fact my mother had jewellery which was buried during the war and she got it out…you know, the war was finished, she got it back up…got my father’s watch and got her jewellery back.

And she got the jewellery made into two rings; one was a solitaire diamond with stones either side and the other was five in a row, diamonds. One was for my sister and one was for my wife, Betty. So when my sister died the ring came to my wife, Betty and she has the two of them now. But…where was I? Oh aye, the same watch he’d given me…

**Bob Mackenzie – Discovering Sarok and Bob’s Return to his Childhood Home**

In 1990, near the end of my service, I was working on a contract in the Outer Hebrides when I saw a letter in The Sunday Post asking if anyone knew anything about the Kindertransport to contact the person below. Coming home for the weekend, I phoned the number listed and spoke to Dorrith Sim.

[Dorrith Sim became involved with trying to locate ex-Kinder from around Scotland. Dorrith initiated SAROK in 1990, the Scottish Association of Reunion of Kinder]

INT: Who started SAROK.

BM: Yes she was the instigator who was trying to arrange a get together of Kinder. Dorrith said she had a photo of some Kinder, which she would send to me to see if I recognised anyone on it. When I received the photo, I was very surprised to find right at the very front were my sister and myself. I was holding the hand of a young girl.

INT: And where was that taken?

BM: Waverley Station.

INT: Ah.

BM: I’ve got a copy there. Have you met Edith Forrester?

INT: No we are still hoping to go and meet her; she’s in St. Andrews I think?

BM: No, Kirkcaldy.

INT: Kirkcaldy.

BM: Edith and I, we keep in touch. It’s only Christmas cards but we put a letter in giving the year’s news, you know. The girl’s hand I was holding was Edith Forrester’s.

INT: Oh goodness.

INT: Was she the only one that you really remember ever having had much contact with?

BM: No, it…I didn’t even know…

INT: You didn’t even know that was her then.

BM: I didn’t even know, well I didn’t even know that that photo had been taken.

INT: Ah.

INT: So you only met Edith after you had met the SAROK people?

BM: After Dorrith Sim got things organised.

INT: OK.

BM: The first meeting of the Kinder.

INT: And you’d really not met any of them again since you came over?

BM: No, never met any of them.

INT: And the people you worked with, did they know your background or was there no cause for them to know that?

BM: Well, by that time my name was Mackenzie, you know.

INT: Uh huh.

BM: Alright, in Forres they knew it – the wee Jewish/German boy, right? In the town, that was it, you know. Eby, Eby…it was ‘Hello Eby’, nobody could say Eberhard  Rosenberg; it was Eby, Eby. It was all I got, you know?

And that was it. I played with them, they played with me and I was in the air training core, in the squad in there, and go down flying to Kinross and it was a case of ‘You going down on Wednesday Eby?’ ‘Eh I’ll try and get the half day off’ and away down we would go, you know. But it was… the local crowd; nobody seemed to bother about it. I never met any other refugee.

INT: You were just one of the locals.

BM: In fact I make use of it now. Do you ever get these funny phone calls, you know, “I am enquiring for Mr Mackenzie. I would like to…” I just reply, “I dinnae ken what your saying man! I dinnae ken. I canny understaun ye” The Forres lingo! Phone down. So it’s paid dividends.

But, as I say, I was…there was my sister and myself and I was holding the hand of a young girl and that was Edith Forrester. It appears the photo had been taken when the children had arrived at Waverley Station in Edinburgh, on their way to Selkirk, and been kept as a memento by one of the group. On 20th May 1990 the first get together of Scottish Kinder took place and the four children in the photo met together for the first time since 1939. Since then there have been regular annual gatherings for Scottish Kinder held at various places in Glasgow. Now where my….So I’ll bring these photos down….your tape’s running, I’ll let you see the photos after.

Although I retired from government service in ’91 I’ve been approached several times by consultancies/agencies to take on various contracts and I succumbed.

I have taken on short term contracts, the last being a contract with Glasgow University. But after retiring five times I have now decided to stay permanently retired. I’m not sure my wife believes me!

So, I’d always wanted to have at least one visit to my old home before I got too old. I knew my cousin Barbara had inherited the house in Neukirchen when my mother died. This was a thank you for looking after my mother in her final days. In ’95 I took a chance and wrote to the old address hoping to get a reply. The letter we got back gave us an open invitation to come any time and we would be most, made most welcome. September ’96 we took the car over the continent, decided to do a month tour and include a visit to my old home.

Took the overnight ferry from Hull to Rotterdam and in the morning we hit the road. First night we got as far as Kassel and the following night we headed for Neukirchen. We swung off the Autobahn and took the A road into Neukirchen. As we entered the town I swung right and we’d only gone about one hundred yards when I knew I was on the wrong road. After all these years…you know, it’s just some trigger. I got out and asked locals in my rusty German, “Wo ist der Bahnhof bitte?” – Where is the railway station please?

She told me to get back to the roundabout and turn right and as soon as I was on that road I knew exactly where I was, even after all these years. And we were about a mile and a half from my old home, I drove directly to it without another mistake. When we arrived my cousin and her husband were waiting for us along with several people who had known me as a boy and also some of the neighbours who had known my parents.

We had intended to stay for perhaps a couple of days and then start touring but my cousin insisted we stay longer. She took us to see another cousin with whom I used to play as a child and also took us to meet my mother’s sister who was living in Chemnitz. We also met some of the families living close by who had known my parents and one lady produced a school photo of herself, which included my sister as they’d both been in the same class.

It’s surprising how the memory of childhood days stick in ones mind. My cousin took us out on a tour of Neukirchen and pointed out various places, which I could remember. On one building however, we disagreed. She pointed out a primary school and asked if I remembered going to it. I told her it was not the school I’d gone to, as my primary school was up a lane, beyond a church.

But she insisted that this was the only primary school in the town. Prior to leaving Neukirchen a friend of my fathers gave me a book on Old Neukirchen and there was a photo of my old primary school, up the lane beyond the church, which is now part of a residential complex. After staying for some time with my cousin we decided to go visit Prague as we were so near – it was only about four hours drive away, a beautiful city well worth the extra mileage. We stayed for four days and could have easier stayed longer. On returning from Prague we stayed at my cousins for a few days to celebrate her husband’s birthday and then set out to do some touring before heading home.

One of the places we visited was the site of Buchenwald Concentration Camp…what an eerie experience. The whole campsite is surrounded by a belt of trees about a mile wide.

The remains of the private railway station can still be seen, where prisoners arriving by the wagonload were herded from there to the camp itself. The main gate has been preserved and now there is an information office in the site. One thing we noticed, at least the young generation are being made aware of the horrors; classes of school children were being guided around the campsite by their teachers. So at least they’re telling the younger generation about it.

INT: Did you find out how your…or why your father was released? Did you ever find that out?

BM: When he came home he got a suitcase, packed it and was off. So we never got a chance to, to find out why he was released.

But on the timescale…when he disappeared…I worked out the timescale with Kristallnacht and it appears that he was one of the ones who…one of the thirty thousand rounded up during Kristallnacht, and that was it, you know. But one thing ….the younger generation were being made aware of the horrors as classes of school children were being guided around by their teachers. When the Russians occupied the area they built a lasting monument in the shape of a huge bell tower, which can be seen for miles around. As well as a tower they also constructed a series of steps to the ‘street of nations’. This is a long street joining up three mass graves and along this street there are monuments depicting the nations who supplied inmates for the camp. There’s nineteen monuments, so nineteen nations supplied prisoners for the camp.

It’s peculiar how information, even after all the passing years, has come out of nowhere. During one of the annual gathering of Kinder in August 2000, I saw the Kinder Transport newsletter with an announcement regarding a Dr. Neitz trying to contact ex- Kinder children who had left on the Kindertransport for the UK. I emailed him and he was very interested about my family. When I sent him more details he emailed me back to let me know that one of the men in his office, Mr Rotstein, had been in Theresienstadt Concentration Camp with my father and grandfather. He also told me that my grandfather had died in the camp on the 18th December 1942, an eighty-two year old man in a concentration camp, … Had we known this we would have been to visit Theresienstadt when we were in Prague in ’96 as the camp was not far from Prague and I believe all the records are still there, you know.

These SAROK meetings, the Kinder, used to get Kinder newsletters. Used to get letters from all over the world and one of the sad things about reading the newsletters was even in the period of time almost sixty years after the end of the war and the freeing of the concentration camp inmates, there are still letters asking for information about people who have never been traced. These letters give details such as date of birth, name, last known abode and ask if anyone knows of them or of any relative who may be able to supply information of their whereabouts.

INT: You think a lot of the people who came over to Scotland ended up going abroad?

BM: Well there appears to be. Some of the ones I’ve talked to in Glasgow have said they were in Glasgow then someone disappeared and, you know, didn’t know where they were.

I was in touch with a chap in Florida, you know, and we’ve got friends in Canada and she’s trying to find any Canadian ones who’ve ended up in the Kindertransport then come over to Canada. There’s quite a lot of them as well. But one of the things that really sticks in my craw is…it annoys me…The United States, you know, the ‘land of liberty and freedom’…blah blah blah, right? It’s possible more children could have been saved if the United States had been willing to take part in the rescue mission. On the 9th of February 1939 a ‘Limited Refugee Bill’ was introduced to the US Senate by Robert F. Wagner. Five days later the same bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by Ed Rodgers and the ‘Wagner-Rodgers Refugee Aid Bill’ called for the admission to the United States of twenty thousand German refugee children under the age of fourteen, over the next two years, in addition to the normal immigration quota.

Within twenty four hours of the plan being made public, four thousand American families had offered homes to these children. Many more offers of accommodation were received via radio stations and newspapers. Unfortunately, after several months of debate, the bill was defeated at committee. You know…that could have been… another twenty thousand children could have been saved. That’s just …I could tell you about, I have it here.

INT: Do you know how they picked the children to go on the Kindertransport? How was it that they found you or do you think your parents found them?

BM: I have no idea. All I know is that my parents said, ‘You are going on a train journey, there’s your case’.

Got it. Now there’s… one of the chaps who used to be at SAROK, I remember him saying (in fact he’s on the disc there) he was about fifteen. He spoke to somebody there who said, ‘Look, you could be in trouble. Go home, tell your mother, pack your haversack’. He said, ‘Just take essentials, none of your hobbies/stamp collection. Just basic essentials and get back here and get on that train’. He was on the train and he came over with us. But how he was…how we were chosen I have no idea, you know.

INT: And you don’t even know how it was that Mr Mackenzie eventually took you and your sister. I know he was willing to take people but it was just sheer chance that it was you and your sister that he took?

BM: Oh aye, could have been anybody, you know.

INT: Uh huh.

BM: It was just a case of the, the Refugee Committee, based in Edinburgh at that time.

INT: And were they Jewish? Or mixed? Who were the committee?

BM: Mixed. I think they were mixed but it was a conglomeration of ….I think it’s somebody in the front here…see this….

‘I recall this debate on the 21st November of various concerned groups involving Home Secretary Dr…Sir Samuel Hoare. During discussions he agreed to speed up documentations required for travel. Now, the various organisations had now combined into the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.

The movement promised to fund the whole operation and state that it would be no drain on the public purse. The funds would be found to guarantee £50.00 (roughly £1,000.00 in today’s money) for every child brought in this country by Kindertransport. By the time the war started it was estimated that around ten thousand children were brought in’. Now, remember that ‘Gathering the Voices’ we were at? There was a young chap there near the door, I don’t know who he was, and I gave him information about a lady who did a thesis on the funding for the Kindertransport and it’s about that thick, you know. And I don’t know whether he dug into it or not but I can give you the details and you can maybe look into it yourself. It was the University of London and she did this thesis for her PhD and she really dug into it; detail, very, very close detail, you know.

INT: That would be useful.

**Bob Mackenzie – Reflection on Life**

Bob talks about the reasons he sees himself as Scottish and reflects on his good fortune in life.

INT: You sound so much like just an average Scots person, you really do. Do you think of yourself at all as German anymore?

BM: No

INT: Not at all?

BM: Not a bit.

INT: When did the changeover really happen?

BM: I think when I was up in Forres because I was accepted as part of the community there. Mr Mackenzie treated me as a son and…Hello my dear?

Mrs M: Can you stop for a cup of tea?

BM: Aye

INT: Five minutes?

Mrs M: Five minutes.

BM: They are going to ask me some questions. I thought I was stopped. No, No, No, ask your questions.

INT: Just a couple of questions.

Mrs M: Right

INT: You can come in if you want to sit down, no?

MRS M: Right, I’ll just get the tea ready.

MRS M: I’ll get the tea ready. I’ll be downstairs.

INT: That’s great. Thank you.

BM: No it was…I mean as far as I was concerned Mr Mackenzie treated me as a son, my sister as a daughter. And I, I don’t know, I was involved in the community there, you know. I went to school, I played with the kids, they came up and played with us, we would go down to the grand park and play. We played football, we played cricket and rounders and all the rest of it. And once I, pardon me, once I got a wee bit older I joined the Air Training Core so I met the local lads, we were all together there. And to me, I was just…I was one of the community.

INT: Yes, yes.

BM: You know. And that’s…

INT: Yes, you obviously still really wanted to keep the connection with your mother and father going.

BM: Oh yes.

INT: So it’s not as if you were forgetting.

BM: No

INT: All about your origins.

BM: No.

INT: But you still had moved over to being British.

BM: Yes.

INT: Definitely British.

BM: I took on the British citizenship and, as I say, my way of thanking Mr Mackenzie for taking us in was to take his name because he had no sons of his own.

INT: Yeah.

INT: Yes, yes.

BM: So I took his name and looking back on it now there is a possibility I could have upset my father, upset him a bit, by giving up his name.

INT: He would just be glad that you were alive, I should imagine.

BM: I think they understood because they… I mean they came through to visit us here, you know, and I just…I don’t know… I left Forres to come down to Glasgow, to work in the shipyards down there so I was one of the crowd, you know.

INT: Yes.

BM: One of the crowd. And in the RAF, you know, you’re all bunched together, you all worked together as a team. It’s…I’m one of the community.

INT: Supposing your parents had been based in West Germany? Do you think you’d have gone back if that had been the case?

BM: That is something I don’t know; I’ve never given it a thought. It was just the fact that there were the Russians and I’m afraid my idea of the Russian strictness and control was just not my idea of life. I don’t think I could have put up with that, you know.

INT: We’ve asked other people what they would say were the high points of life here in Scotland for you and any low points, what would you say that would be?

BM: Well the high point I think is meeting the Mrs and getting married!

INT: That is a high point.

INT: That is indeed a high point.

BM: Low points….I can’t think of any low points. We’ve been fortunate. We’ve had a good life. I’ve been…I’ve had a decent job all my working days, Betty had a decent job. We’ve had a comfortable life, brought up two boys who are doing well for themselves and…

INT: Six grandchildren.

BM: Six grandchildren yes.

INT: Do the grandchildren…are they fascinated by this extra dimension in your life? Having a German connection?

BM: Some are and some couldn’t care less. Robert, the youngest boy, and his wife and three of the kids were through on Christmas and I got Ruth to put on (she’s a wizard with the computer) and I said “Ruth,” I said…Well Robert, actually, he’s an IT specialist. “Robert” I said “Can you put the powerpoint on my computer?” he said “No” and said “Ruth or Ben will do it for you.”

Ruth put it on for me and it’s just as well I asked her because she struggled and I wouldn’t have had a clue, you know. But she put it on and it worked and that was fine and I played her the PowerPoint pictures, you know. She was the same as you – “Oh, what’s that? And the Shul too?” Fascinated her, you know. She’s quite interested, you know, and the one down in Campbeltown, the eldest grandson down in Campbeltown, he’s quite interested. But the rest of them…it’s just run of the mill, you know.

INT: Were you glad to get to meet the Kinder? I mean you were obviously very quick to reply to Dorrith. Did you enjoy meeting others who had come over?

BM: Oh aye, I was in there the first chance I got, you know, because as I say I was…I was working in Stornoway at the time and I used to fly down at the weekend and fly back up on the Monday. And when she sent me the picture…where did I put that?

INT: Pictures.

BM: Oh it’s here, it’s here; lying at my feet and I can’t see it. Do you want to switch this off and save your tape here?

INT: No it’s alright because…it’s alright now I think.

BM: The picture at the bottom of the page, that’s the one that was taken at Waverley Station.

INT: Oh, so is that you there?

BM: I need my glasses.

INT: Is that you there?

BM: No that’s me there.

INT: There.

BM: I’m holding Edith’s hand.

INT: Ah right.

BM: So that’s Edith Forrester and that’s my sister there.

INT: Right, right. So that’s…Is it Isolda?

BM: Isolda.

INT: Isolda. So that, that is him.[Bob] You had a bit more hair then. Over than that, pretty identical.

BM: Don’t rub it in please!

INT: And that’s the Forrester girl.

BM: That’s Edith Forrester.

INT: That’s so amazing.

INT: And all of these people then are arriving at Waverly Station?

BM: To go to Selkirk.

INT: And what was in Selkirk?

BM: It was a…The Priory in Selkirk was a holding station.

INT: For Kinder or for just any…

BM: No just for Kinder.

INT: Just for Kinder.

INT: See most of the people we’ve come across, they arrived in Liverpool Street in London and came to Scotland various ways after that so this is not, not the common experience.

INT: Did you not go to Liverpool Street as well?

BM: I haven’t a clue.

INT: You don’t know that.

BM: They only thing is I know, I know I arrived at Harwich, right.

INT: Right.

BM: Because…

INT: I think from Harwich you may well have been taken to Liverpool Street.

INT: So there must have been a Scottish group who had already selected some children to be there.

BM: There is the Kinderausweis, that’s what it looks like. The wee bit ‘Staatenlos’ at the bottom. There is a bigger view of the picture at Waverley Station.

INT: Oh that’s a very good picture.

INT: Did you ever find out if…

BM: Are you coming through dear? Hold on a minute, We need to shift the…. (Mrs M arrives with the tea)