TRANSCRIPTION
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PHYL COTTON (b. ca. 1925, Edinburgh), owner of Calve Island, talks about her background, her life as the sole resident of the small island that directly faces Tobermory on the opposite side of Tobermory Bay, and the upper-class social scene on Mull in which she was a participant in her younger days. What follows is a record of the gist of the interview, not necessarily a word-for-word transcription.

> [Field project "Faces of Mull," University of California Research Expeditions, 1993; John Niles, director. Tape number 93PCOT–01, recorded on 14 July 1993 by Priscilla Johnson at Timbertop holiday cottage, Tobermory. Others present: John Niles and a small group of UREP volunteers.]
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> [The recorded interview begins *in medias res*, with Mrs. Cotton telling the group how she makes the crossing from her home on Calve Island to the town of Tobermory and back. She makes the crossing on her own, rowing an open boat rather than using a boat powered by an outboard motor.]

… [If] I can't start my outboard engine. If it hadn't started the first time, which it rarely does, then you're downwind. And then if you have to pull the cord three times, you're well downwind. If it doesn't start at all, then you're much better to judge the sea, stick your head down and row.

—How long does it take you to cross?

It all depends on the day. If it's a southwest wind, it's the best wind for me because it's blowing directly on my slipway. And although it may be difficult to get the boat out of the slipway, halfway across, you suddenly find yourself in the calm water where the cliff on the Mull side is keeping the wind from you. So then you're in calm water. And on your way home you go down the cliff and you start off from the Mull side in calm water. By the time you're halfway across, the wind hits you and it carries you straight on to your landing.

According to the Admiralty charts, the tidal streams in the [Dòirlinn? —the narrows] of Calve are not strong. Not really. They're a little tricky because when the tide is rising, the waters are coming up the Sound of Mull. And after a certain point has been reached, you get to the point of Calve, the town, the corner, and then the waters seem to be going the other way. So people in sailing boats, the local people who know the trick of that, they can beat any other boat.

—Do you have any visitors?

It so happens that my son [Chris Cotton] is one of these people that knows everyone, and he always appears. You see, unfortunately, my husband [Tom Cotton] was a naval officer and he was away so much of our lives. You know, he was just away and away and away and away. He

was very young when he bought the place. He came from a very old family in England, the Cottons of Maddingly.

You know Maddingly house? It should ring a bell, because Maddingly is where the enormous American cemetery is located. [The allusion is to the cemetery just outside Cambridge, England, where many American servicemen who died during WW II are buried.] Well, my husband is a direct descendant of the Cottons of Maddingly. But he wasn't the direct heir who would have inherited it; it wasn't his inheritance.

The Cottons had held on to that house since the time of Charles I. The Cottons always married the heiress next door, and so they could hold on to their property, pretty cunningly and quite carefully. It's very convenient to have very rich girls who live next door. And so they had been very happy there.

They were very much a naval family, and a number of them were in the House of Commons. At the end of the war, you see, they thought that all young naval officers had to learn to fly. My husband was about 22, I think, and he was in one of the first courses.

And then 1947 came along, one of the worst winters that anybody remembers. After the war, we hadn't got our snowplows going and everything because, you know, we hadn't had winters so bad that you needed to have snowplows in the streets of London. That course was often snowed up completely — I had a car that got snowed up and it was never seen again. I mean, it was as bad as that. It really was quite wild. — So then the courses went on. They were very very much against time because by then the course should have been finished. Of course, it wasn't. And to cut a long story short, my husband was doing a deck landing and he had a crash [on an airplane carrier]. It was the sort of accident that before the war, you would have been in a wheelchair forever. They put him into a kind of plaster, you know, from the neck right down, just completely encased in plaster.

And so, I, who was very much Scottish, you see, and had a great many connections in Argyll — we went to live in a friend's lodge. You know how mansion houses in Scotland and England usually had a lodge at the gates. And so this friend lent us her lodge. Mia More [the name of the lodge? or the person?]. If I just looked across the loch [Loch Linne?], if I climbed the hill there, I'd be in my grandfather's house. And if I looked down the loch, I'd see the mountains of Arran where one of my father's houses was. So it was a very nice spot for me to be. And there was my dear husband in his crusad of plaster. And he was one of the people who "heard the Celtic twilight." That is a phrase that you can understand; you hear the Celtic twilight and nothing gets you away from Argyll. You fall in love with Argyll: there's something magic in it. It's mad. And we put up with all this weather for the one good day, you see, and then we forgive it everything.

He just absolutely adored the idea of living in Argyll. So at that time, all the very large mansion houses were being sold off at the most absurd prices, just for nothing really. And he went to look at a great many of them and came to the conclusion that unless you could afford to *maintain* a really big house, it was not a good proposition. What we really needed was a house

where you could shut the door and walk away. And then Calve Island suddenly came on the market.

I know now that the day we came to look at it, it was probably *the* day of the season. The sea was deep green and blue, and it was high tide, and it was absolute heaven. And we stayed at the Western Isles Hotel, and instead of having that horrible car park that they have at the Western Isles Hotel now, they had a beautiful garden. And you could imagine the whole thing was just magic. You drove up to this beautiful garden, you went into the hotel, you looked out on the island, and someone came and took you out in the motorboat and that was it. By the time he'd walked around it, well, he'd already bought it! Meanwhile I was left in the house with my baby, and I looked around and said, "This is a house I will never live in!" So there you are.

I've lived here for 44 years. But the thing is, you see, we then went to Ireland: he was in the squadron there. And Ireland in these days was the most enormous fun. Don't know why.

Everybody seemed to be young. Everybody was out to be as kind and as good and as hospitable as they could be. And the beaches in Donegal (?) were lovely. We lived in a house called Bangalia (?) Hall.

You see, my husband used to not ask what houses are to let. He found a house he would like to live in and then asked who lives there, you see. So, between the Irish customs and the English customs, there was a road that went up. There was a drive, and he found this very large house. He found that it belonged to a man named Mr. Willy Hamilton and made some inquiries about Mr. Willy Hamilton. He was told that the house was totally empty and there wasn't a hope of ever renting it because it never had been rented. So, when I arrived in Ireland, my husband said, "We're going up to look at Bangalia Hall." And we walked around it: it was absolute heaven. We found a man in the stable and Tom said, "I'm looking for Mr. Hamilton."

"Yes," he said. "Which Mr. Hamilton?"

"Mr. Willy Hamilton."

"I'm a Mr. Willy Hamilton. Who wants him?"

"You know, I'm from down in Londonderry and want to know if I could rent your house."

And he said no, he couldn't. Anyhow, he wrote down Tom's name, and not long afterwards, Tom got a letter from a solicitor who said, "Would he call on him?" And he thought, "What on earth is this about?" So he went into Londonderry and in the place called the Diamond, which is sort of the middle of Londonderry — which has been bombed again and again and again — he found this solicitor. And the solicitor said, "Tell me. What's the secret?"

He said, "The secret about what?"

He said, "How has Mr. Willy Hamilton let his house to you?"

And he said, “Why should it be a secret?”

He said, “Do you not realize the very tragic story that lies behind all that? Mr. Willy Hamilton had a farm and he wished to increase his land, and the Bangalia land along with the house came on the market. And he took his bride there and she died having a baby. And he shut the house up and he walked away, and he never entered the house again. So he repulses any approach to him.”

So the lawyer said, “You realize that it’s a pretty big place and it has no furniture.”

So my husband said, “Well, I think I’ll find furniture.” And so he went to a place that sold furniture and antiques, and he went to see the man and he explained to him. And this Irishman said, “Come away behind and we’ll show you where we make the antiques.” So, he went behind. And he said, “Now what will you be wanting? You’d want a table.”

“Yes, I want a table.”

“Now how many would you like to sit at your table?”

“Not more than eight. I wouldn’t say more than eight. Half a table, a table for eight.”

“And now you’re wanting...” —You know, and he went through all the things that one would want. “And you’ll need a sofa and you’ll this and you’ll need that.”

And we were only going to furnish three of the bedrooms and the bathroom — I must say, you could have danced two eights and reels in the bathroom, you could say. And you also had a window that was stuck that you couldn’t shut. And coal was rationed, so I think you only had the boiler on about twice a week, you know. I don’t know if your coal ration went as far as that. So, we moved to Bangalia.

This was after Tom had bought Calve. We’d moved here [referring to Calve Island]), but we had to go to Ireland because he was appointed there.

So, then, after we’d been in Ireland, he was then appointed to Malta. And we were away in Malta for five years and then we came back. And so the little house on Calve was there all by itself. Then when we came back from Malta, I said, “This house — I said I’d never live in it.” It was much too small. You couldn’t have people to stay. And so we proceeded to convert all the outbuildings into a house, not changing the structure but only changing the interior, because the walls are at least three feet thick there.

I can’t tell you exactly how old the house is, but I should think probably there’s been something there from 200 years ago. Well, the whole property over there from the 1860’s — all the land between here and Dervaig and Salen — belonged to Mrs. Normand’s grandfather. [Originally to her great-grandfather, Bryce Allan, 1814–1874]. And you see, on an old site where there had been a house, he built Aros House in 1860. His family owned the Allan Shipping Line, and they had been captains in sail on the American run, and then they were captains in steam.

We've always been told that when the other captains were drinking themselves afloat on New York's waterfront, the Allans, who didn't drink, were buying themselves real estate, and that is why they never had to work again. And they finally sold out to Cunard; the Allan shipping line was bought by Cunard.

The demolition of Aros House was the greatest act of absolute vandalism. Well, it was Sandy [Alexander] Allan, Mrs. Normand's cousin. He really wasn't interested in money. You never are if you have plenty. And so, you see they had the big house that you'll see on the high road, now called Linndhu. And that was the dower house, where the grandmother always goes to stay if her son inherits. And Sandy, you see, he [wanted] to live in — Mrs. Normand's mother used to live in the dower house because she was the daughter of the Allans, you see. And then when her nephew wanted to get out of Aros, which was something like 18 bedrooms, you know, and everything in it was first quality Victorian — a little overwhelming but first quality — he wanted to get out and live in the dower house. And the House was sitting there empty.

He offered it for no money at all to whoever would like to have it — as a boy's club or an old folk's home or made into flats or anything you like. And it was just at the wrong time, somehow, and the land was sold to the Forestry Commission, and they sold the house for nothing to a firm of breakers. And they took out all the paneling and all the floors and the windows and the stained glass. They then thought that once they demolished the place because it was made of granite, that they could send the granite to the mainland bit by bit, only to discover the charges on the steamers or boats for one piece of granite was so enormous! Nobody had done their homework, you see.

So then, there stood this enormous place which had a great tower. And they had taken all the banisters down from the stairs that led up into the tower, and the village mothers said [that] children go across there and they play in the shell of the house; and they dare each other to go to the top of the tower. And there was a great outcry and they said something must be done before somebody's killed. And then the comedy continues. Edinburgh University had something called the Officer's Training Corps, so the Officer's Training Corps came along and they said, "Well, do you mind if we do a little exercise, and would you like us to bring the tower down?" So everybody said that's fine. So they put some charges on the tower.

Well, they broke every window at Calve Island! They broke quite a lot of windows in Tobermory, and we then had a bombed site over there. And about a month later, my husband came in — he was a captain of one of the destroyers — and he came in with his ship and his gunners went to shore. And they said, "Do you not realize that the charge they put under there would have blown up a battleship?" So then they sent in bulldozers to bulldoze away all that remained of the house, and they put the house down into the ravine. Oh, it's quite extraordinary.

So at Calve Island, now, I have got some of the double doors that were in the drawing room at Aros, and I've got a beautiful fireplace that used to be at Aros, and various bits and pieces that were given to me by the former owner, Sandy Allan. And that's the history of that.

I never liked the dining room at Aros House much, but it had a lovely drawing room and a lovely ballroom. And the study was very nice but it'd only look south. I would have cared for it more if you'd been able to see the sea.

Mrs. Normand's grandfather used to always have the grounds open on the Sunday so that anybody could go walking there. And of course, it was so beautifully planted up with every kind of flowering tree you could think of. The lot of that was destroyed when the Forestry Commission felled a lot of the extremely large trees and then dragged them out with chains and things. They destroyed quite a lot over there.

What is terribly comic, of course, is that they used to have enormous house parties over there and — you know how people always take photographs? Well, it always seemed to us, looking through the old photographs, that any photographs taken at Aros House were taken at the front door. All the other photographs were taken on Calve Island, which was then part of their property. So, you have hundreds of photographs of everybody at Calve, not at Aros. It's quite funny, isn't it? The reason is that they loved sailing, and they were always in the boat. Mrs. Normand's mother, when she was over 80, she still sailed.

When we came to live on Mull, there was practically no middle class. The people who lived in the castle houses did not have motorcars. Now, I should think there isn't one house where they don't have a motorcar. And it always had been a Scotch habit that boys went to the local school and if they had intelligence, their parents, if they were reasonable people, always wanted them to go to a better school on the mainland. From there, they probably won awards to some of the bigger schools in Glasgow or Edinburgh. And from there they went to universities. And as they got on in life — and a lot of them did — their children sent their sons not to the village school but to one of the bigger schools. And I think it all worked very well.

I think there's been an enormous change in the outlook that people have. And I think they speak very carelessly. I think there's been enormous changes, really. But I don't know if it's for the better. For one thing, I think morally — I do know in the Highlands a lot of people had illegitimate children, but then people just rather ignored it. But usually whoever was responsible for the child married the mother. Now, I think people don't give a damn, and I think that that is a pity. I think it is with much too great an ease that people can just abandon their family now. I think it's perfectly frightful.

Every few years, every time I've come home, I've been told "So and so has left her husband" or "He's run off with someone." And I've always been absolutely winded by it, because that sort of thing didn't happen so easily before. There would have been a certain amount of censure, but now I feel there isn't any. And I wouldn't mind if people were happier, but they're not. Never think that it's the whole key to the thing if people were happier! But they're jolly well not.

People used to have the habit of having what they called a ceilidh. Have you been told what a ceilidh is? A ceilidh is usually meeting at somebody's house, and you have an evening of song and dance. And you all sing together and it's just a jolly evening. And I think that that happened enormously in Tobermory, even in tiny houses. People always had a ceilidh. Well, then, television came and then people would think, "Oh I can't go and call on them. They might be watching so and so," you see what I mean? And that, I think, cut out a lot of the sociability.

I think in the ordinary way, people have a great appreciation of music. I think that the people in the West Highlands really do enjoy music.

I think the ceilidhs were spontaneous. I mean, they could be planned, but really people]would just arrive at someone's house and then somebody else would come and someone else would come. And then next day you'd say, "We had a wee-hooley at so and so's," you know? Great fun.

You see, in Mull, in the big houses a few years ago, well, 25 years ago, all the grandmothers were in charge. And all these grandmothers were people who really liked entertaining, and they used to give the most wonderful balls. It really was lovely. And if you were young, like my children were, it made all the difference to your life. But Lord MacLean's aunt, Mrs. Martin [?], said to me once, "You know, I went through the book that I had of all my visits." She said, "When I was asked to go and stay with someone for a ball or a party or something, they were all written in my book. I went through it the other day and there is less than a handful of these houses that still support a staff and give lovely parties and have masses of people to stay." And of course in Mull, the same thing has happened. You see?

—Do the people in the big houses tend to keep up with one another?

Yes, they do, but I don't know what will happen in the next generation at all. You see, at Torosay Castle, Mrs. Miller, who had been a Guthrie — her first husband was a man called James, and her son was an MP. He escaped from prison in Germany and had a terrifying time getting out of the country, and several people wrote books about him. Anyhow, later he was the Member of Parliament for Brighton, in the south of England. And in Brighton, they built Sussex University, and Sussex happened to come within his constituency. And in the next election, the University students, every man jack of them, voted against him and David James, with his huge majority, lost by seven votes. They had many recounts, but that was it. Later, when David died, his wife said, "Well, if we want to keep Torosay, we'd better open it to the public." And she's a very nice person and great fun and works very hard. But, of course, you can't live in it quite the same way if it's open to the public.

The family lives in most of the house at Glengorm Castle. Glengorm used to be a great house for hide and seek. It was one of the sons who lived there when my children were young. He's like another son to me because he's lived so much with us.

Unfortunately, my husband died when he was 43, never having been ill for a day. And no one could really believe it. He just had a heart attack. And then my daughter, whom everybody adored, especially me, she died the same year. And again it was something that people found terribly difficult to grasp.

And so I've lived out on the island very, very, very much alone. But because my son is somebody who is very gregarious and knows masses and masses of people, he always comes up to stay, and he always brings with him a great many people to stay. And so in all the years that his friends were at college, they would always come to stay with me. I wasn't lonely because I had them all in the holidays. And then my own friends, you see, my own age, they would say,

“Oh God. Do I really want to go stay with Phyl? Heavens, no central heating. Goodness, all that boating, how ghastly!” But my son’s friends would say, “Oh, Phyl, do you mind having Charles? Do you mind if Alexander comes to stay?” And so I’ve far more friends of my son’s age than my own.

But you see, the trouble is, they’re all forty now. And they’re all in their professions and all doing extremely well. And although they laugh at this, their wives perhaps are not quite so keen, and most of them have babies, and they don’t really fancy the idea of bringing their tiny babies to Calve.

But I wouldn’t say we were at all integrated, really, with the island in general. You see, I used to know all the people, the indigenous population, except for the people who lived along Front Street. But sadly for me, a great many of them have died.

You see, the whole world thinks they want to have an island, but the truth is, if they’re given one, they don’t.

Somebody once said to me, “For heaven’s sake, you have to get your feet on the ground, because Calve is sort of a Shangri-la.” Well, the reason it is, is this. It gives you a very false view of life, because you close your eyes to the idea you will ever meet someone you don’t care for, that you’d ever meet somebody who is a villain, because nobody is ever asked to Calve whom you don’t love. And so, you see, you have a house full of people and you adore them all. And so life is the greatest fun. But you don’t have people there that you don’t care for. It isn’t life!

It makes you very selfish, in a way. We knew a lot of the young people who played instruments, and everybody played. And we could be playing all night and nobody could say to us, “Why are you making that racket!” or “Have you no thought for other people!” because we didn’t. And I used to find also that when all the young were difficult early teenagers, all the boys were marvelous. I’d say, “Darling, I think we need a few logs.” Nobody ever made a face. They went and got a few logs. Or you’d say, “Heavens, the water’s running out.” They said, “I’ll go to the spring,” and they’d just go to the spring. So life was always very tranquil. And there are hundreds of books over there. I am now trying to sort them out and get rid of a few of them, because I’ve given the place to my son, you see. And I thought it would be fair to give my daughter-in-law more room to expand, you know what I mean?

Every time my son and daughter-in-law come up, they bring a mob with them. And so they have a wonderful time. But I wonder what it will be like when they’re much older and there’s only just two of them.

While Chris was at college and he used to bring so many people to stay, other friends used to say to me, “So how can you have as many people to stay? I mean, aren’t you absolutely worn out?” I said, “Certainly not, because they look after me!” All these girls who’d done their cordon bleu courses and all the rest of it; even they just loved it, and they did all the cooking and everything. I wouldn’t have thought of trying to. I always made sure that there were ten beds made and all the young girls were in the main house — there were no “in and out windows” in

my house — and all the young men were in what we call the barn-house. And it was all great fun.

But, you see, I had to face this idea, "What do you do?" I mean, say my husband had lived to a normal sort of age. And one was now out there, you know, just the two of us. Do you become bored with each other or what? One just doesn't know. But my daughter-in-law and son, I think they have such a terribly bright social life that I don't quite — he just loves the place — but I don't know if she would eventually stay.

Anyhow, I won't be here to see it. Because you see, to get anything done over there, anything that's needing done in the house, you've got to go and fetch the person to come to do it. You've got to get them back. I mean, if it's too rough a day, you know the sort of thing. Anyhow, one has survived it. It's terribly funny because my son said, "Now, I want you to listen to me very carefully. I don't like that small boat of yours. I don't like it at all."

"Well, darling, if I had a bigger one I couldn't pull it up the beach."

"Well I don't think you should be pulling it up the beach in any case."

"Well, you're quite right."

"Well now, I want you to make quite certain that you don't have that boat overladen."

"All right, darling."

So then the other day, my daughter-in-law's sister suddenly arrived. She phoned Mrs. Normand, who spoke to me on the walkie-talkie and said, "Lavinia (?) is arriving with Jim Cochran and his son." And so there we were up there, and I thought, "Well, there's Lavinia and Jim and Jim's son and me. That's four in that small boat." I said, "What do you all weigh?"

So the boy, who really lives in Canada, was telling me in pounds, and that didn't do me much good. I had to look at him and I reckoned what I thought. And so I said — well, having been told on no account whatsoever am I to get this boat overladen — I said, "It's quite calm, isn't it?" And they all said, "Yes." And I said, "Well, if we can go four in the boat it will mean one journey to Calve and one journey back. If we can't go four in the boat, it means one journey there, one back to pick up a person..." you know. We were then going to do about six crossings instead of two.

So we set off from the shore and we had the two men, one in the bow and the other in the stern and Lavinia and I were in the middle and we had an oar each. And so, we had just left the shore when suddenly Lavinia said, "Oh! What's happened? What happened there?" And I said, "Actually, you've hooked the oarlock into the water." So there we were, in this boat, off the shore, seventy-eight feet of water under us, and it's like looking down a three story house. I said, "Now don't anybody try to get out of the boat to get back to the shore. There's seventy-eight feet of depth here."

"Good God!" they said. So I said, "Well now, if nobody gets hysterical and nobody starts a riot and nobody starts to laugh, we may get to the other side."

And so we got to the other side. And in the boat house we found other oarlocks to come back with. But to then have to admit to Chris, "Well, actually, we went four in the boat and lost an oarlock on the way!"

We have a spring on the island, and we have a little pump attached to it. Some people say, "The first thing I would do would be to have it piped to the house." And I say, "Well, it's the last thing I would do!" I don't think you want to interfere too much with springs. Besides which, sometimes it gives you a nice little walk. You can walk along the beach swinging your bucket.

The water for washing up and for the lavatories is pumped by an electric pump into the roof. When you think of what the water supplies in most towns go through, I mean, ours — we know at least where it comes from! But our baths — the water is very brown indeed. It's from the peat.

Lady Diana Cooper used to write the most wonderful letters, and in one letter she said she'd been to stay with her sister somewhere up in the Highlands here. She said, "I know exactly what's going to happen. She's going to come running down the jetty holding out her arms and saying, "Darling, how wonderful to see you! You're going to love it here." She says, "And then I get into my bath and I look down and I suddenly think that I'm chicken in aspic."

And you know, I *would* always be running down the jetty saying, "Darling, it's so wonderful to see you!" And then I stopped doing it after that. But you see, chicken and aspic, the white body and this brown water around you — this is a wonderful description, isn't it?

We used to have a sort of parlor game that you had to invent anything that would make money out of Calve. And one person, my aunt, said, "Now look! There's no doubt about it. The only thing for you to do — the place where you play so golf so well in the spring before the bracken comes up, you make the entrance fee to this golf club expensive enough. It'll be a success."

This is one of the most comic things. I lived there in the days when we just had lamps, and of course you had to fill all your lamps, and you had to light them and clean them. And then we had a diesel engine. When they got power from the mainland at Duart Castle, Lord MacLean sold us his smaller one; he had two diesel engines there, a big one and a smaller one as a sort of backup. When they got mains electricity, he sold my son and me his smaller engine. So for a number of years, we had a diesel engine that made our own electric light and did the vacuum cleaner and a mowing machine.

But my son had the place electrified. It's got mains electricity now. They were making electrification for the island of Iona and they had a lot of cable. And it was Mr. Normand who pointed out to my son that the EEC had said that they would meet part of the cost for the electrification of the islands. Well, what they've done in the outer islands is quite extraordinary.

Absolutely amazing! And my son said, “But I shouldn’t think they’re at all likely to do it for us.” So, Mr. Normand said, “Look, I would ask if I were you.” And I don’t think it had anything to do with the fact that the man who was then head of the hydroelectric board was the former marine officer who had picked my husband up when he had his air crash! But anyhow, they said that they would do part of it. I mean, it cost my son a great deal of money, but part of it was paid by the EEC.

They were going to put the cable across the narrows, and they were going to have an enormous number of poles from the narrows to the house. There was a great deal of correspondence in the Oban Times on our lines saying, “Vandalism!” and “Ruining the View!” and all the rest of it. But nobody knew that the people who objected most were ourselves. My son persuaded them that they must take the poles down and bring the cable up the other side.

So now you see the difference it’s made to life out there. It’s causing a great deal of hilarity at the moment because all the beds have hot blankets, and in the bathroom there is actually a heated towel rail. And above all the beds in the barn-house, there’s the most delightful little light above. I’ve never heard of anything so absurd in all my life. I want to go into peals of laughter!

One of the ways we thought we might make money out of Calve was this. We were going to run a place where you went to lose weight and a place where you weren’t allowed to have any alcohol. And you employed very pretty girls as the staff, and then, after they’d been doing their diets for a week or so, one of the pretty girls would say, “What of having a walk to the other side of the island?” On the other side of the island, you would then have somebody in a boat — and this pretty girl didn’t appear to have anything to do with it — but she’d say, “Why don’t you go down and talk to old George, who’s in his boat?”

So they would all go down and, of course, George was heavily laden with every kind of drink you could think of, and all the sweets and chocolate you could think of, and they would be doing it on the side, pretending, you know. So then, it was a sort of a double thing, you see? And that would have really worked marvelously.

Otherwise, I don’t think there’s really any way. People run out of ideas as to how you could make money out of Calve.

There are a lot of sheep there. And two brothers called MacLean ran their sheep there for thirty-six years. Alistair, who’s an extremely handsome man and very, very powerful — his father was the head gardener at Aros. He died earlier this year, and his brother is now looking after the sheep. They are not my sheep, but we wanted somebody working there with their sheep who really wanted to be there and who would give me help. They had free grazing for the amount of help they gave me. They brought heavy parcels over to the island because, you see, we had to take our oil over. And so it was nice to have them around.

I don’t think people are ever grateful enough, ever. After my husband died, I discovered what wonderful friends I had. And I think it is something to be eternally grateful for, loving

friends who help you to do all sorts of things. And I've also been fortunate that I've had a lot of creative friends who're always, you know, writing or painting or playing, that carry you forward.

But I think a lot of people just accept that either they're very lucky or not, and they just accept it. And I think you should always be terribly grateful. I don't know what I would have done without my friends.

[End of interview.]