

**WM0827 Fergus McElroy**

**SPEAKERS**

Una Walls, Fergus McIlroy

**Una Walls 00:00**

So, what age were you when you left school?

**Fergus McIlroy 00:02**

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**Una Walls 00:04**

And what did you do then?

**Fergus McIlroy 00:06**

I went into transport right away.

**Una Walls 00:10**

Well tell me a bit about your career in transport.

**Fergus McIlroy 00:12**

One of the memories I have with the war years was we had a flashlight on our straps, showing us the tickets and we'd no headlights on the buses it was just a slit.

**Fergus McIlroy 00:26**

And all our travelling was practically at nighttime, it was so dangerous during the daytime, you know.

**Una Walls 00:31**

Who owned the bus company?

**Fergus McIlroy 00:33**

Northern Ireland Road Transport Board, NIRTB and they were taken over by Ulsterbus.

**Una Walls 00:42**

What training did you need to be a conductor?

**Fergus McIlroy 00:44**

None. Well, one of the senior conductors took you out for a week showing you the stages and the fairs and how to read a timetable which was a big thing.

**Una Walls 00:57**

Do you remember any of the fares? How much that they would have been?

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:00

Well from Kilkeel to Newry was three shillings and tenpence and from Belfast it was seventeen shillings and tenpence and there were eighty-two stages between Kilkeel and Belfast.

**Una Walls** 01:14

Were the buses well used by people?

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:17

At nighttime they were, yeah.

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:19

During the day people never left home, but we kept transport moving.

**Una Walls** 01:25

And when the trains still running from Belfast at that stage?

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:28

They still were, yep.

**Una Walls** 01:31

And which would have been more popular for people, the trains and the buses?

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:34

The buses.

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:35

Our first bus out of Kilkeel in the morning was half past six and we met the train at Newcastle, which took all the workers to Harland & Wolff in the shipyard.

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:47

We knew everybody by name and we would never leave them behind like we were on the road at six o'clock in the morning and if you are missing, we waited on you.

**Fergus McIlroy** 01:56

And the trains waited for us until we arrived should we have been twenty minutes late. They waited on us and they got the bus. They got the train from Newcastle to Belfast then.

**Una Walls** 02:10

And did you work in transport all during the war?

**Fergus McIlroy** 02:13

I did. Yeah.

**Una Walls** 02:14

Do you remember where you were when the war ended?

**Fergus McIlroy** 02:18

I was in Kilkeel, I was still in transport. The first run we did to Belfast, we'd taken off the slits on the headlights on the bus, for to give us light.

**Fergus McIlroy** 02:28

We went to Belfast with three slits in the headlights and we had to drive that way.

**Una Walls** 02:36

So it was great to get the full lights?

**Fergus McIlroy** 02:37

It was great to get the full lights on.

**Una Walls** 02:38

And what was Belfast, like when you arrived.

**Fergus McIlroy** 02:42

Well it was really dark, yeah.

**Una Walls** 02:44

But after, whenever the war was over, whenever you know when it was declared over- were there many celebrations? Were there big celebrations in Belfast.

**Fergus McIlroy** 02:54

Oh, there were, yeah, there were street parties.

**Una Walls** 02:57

Were there any celebrations in Kilkeel?

**Fergus McIlroy** 03:00

Oh we had yeah, the local church was very good to us, but for to see butter on the table and apple tart and fresh cream.