

**Manx Heritage Foundation  
Oral History Project**

**Mr Clifford Irving**  
talking with  
**Mr David C Doyle**  
1997

**Mr Doyle:** Mr Irving, you were born in Peel on the 24th day of May 1914 and today we are going to try and cover the years 1914-1926 but before we get to the birth could you tell us something about your parents, please?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, like many other young people at that period my father Willie Irving, as he was known in Peel, emigrated to South Africa with his friend George Moore, later of the Raggatt, near Peel, and Member of the Keys for Peel. My mother, a Miss Cottier, joined my father in South Africa where they were married near Kimberley. In fact I was conceived in South Africa. My parents returned to Peel where I was born in my grandfather's house. My grandfather was Edward Cottier, the draper, and during all my life in Peel I always lived with my grandparents. My parents lived nearby and I probably spent as much time in their house as with my grandparents. It was a very happy situation and especially after my mother died when I was six years old my grandparents were still very anxious that I should stay and live in their house. I had a brother, Frank, who unfortunately died in the past few years. So, between my grandparents and my parents it was a very happy situation. We all got on very well indeed.

**Mr Doyle:** Can you recall your earliest memories of being brought up in Peel, in the west of the Island?

**Mr Irving:** Oh dear, oh dear. I do not know. I envy these people who say, I can remember when I was such and such an age, three years old, something happened. I have tried to outdo them now and again by saying the first thing I remember was being smacked on the bottom and held up by my legs but I really do not remember my early years, I do not think I would be expected to but I remember having a very happy boyhood in Peel. I loved Peel and being in Peel and it felt it was a little place all on its own in the world. I have since said, in the past few years, that Peel was the last bastion of the Manx people. Well, even in those days I was very fond of it and ignored the rest of the world which included Douglas of course. I have mentioned my brother Frank. My father got married again and married a Winifred Faragher who was the daughter of Inspector John Faragher of the police in Peel and I have a half-brother, Jack Irving, who is quite a Manx scholar and a very good speaker of Manx, who carries on conversations in Manx with his friends. Now I attended the Infant School in Peel, then I moved to the Peel Clothworkers Junior School in 1921 and I stayed at Peel Clothworkers until I left Peel in '26. But in 1926, when I left Peel and went to Canada, the headmaster was a Mr P C Moore, brother of Noah Moore and uncle of Norah Moore, two people who in Douglas, for many years, were prominent in the music world here. This Mr Moore, when I left, wrote a letter to the Director of Education at the place where I was going in Canada and described my short career with them, the school, the classes, what they taught. There is two long foolscap pages in his handwriting and it was signed by every member of the staff of the school. Now I thought that was wonderful. I cannot imagine anybody doing that nowadays.

**Mr Doyle:** And did you, as a boy, spend most of your time in Peel? Would you go to Douglas?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I did. Yes. Go to Douglas by train of course. The bus company was not formed until 1926, just before I left Peel, so the method of transport was by train. Very few people had motor cars and one thing I do recall about the train in those days, I remember one morning my father said he was going to Douglas but he thought he would be a bit late, would I go and tell the guard. So I went to Peel railway station and saw Mr Quirk there, the guard, and I said my father is going to Douglas this morning but he may be a bit late and he said, oh all right, he will have to hurry up, and the train waited until my father arrived. Now that was splendid service on behalf of the railway company, wasn't it? Otherwise, of course, our other means of transport was in a horse and cart or, if you like, a pony and trap.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you go to Douglas?

**Mr Irving:** And I did... Every time I ever went to Douglas which was very rarely and I suppose it was almost the equivalent of me going to New York nowadays.

**Mr Doyle:** Really.

**Mr Irving:** It really was a long way away.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** I went a few times to Douglas, mainly to see relations living here but we did go now and again by horse and trap to places like Glen Maye, to concerts, or St John's for something there, some activity.

**Mr Doyle:** What work was your father involved in?

**Mr Irving:** My father had a pop business, making mineral waters in Peel and I remember one day he said to me, 'I am getting a motor van,' and we all had to go to the outskirts of Peel to see this wonderful motor van which was one of the first commercial vehicles in the Peel area.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there many private vehicles in Peel?

**Mr Irving:** No. The main traffic in Peel, of course, was farm carts, certainly milk carts, a number of milk carts. I lived in Douglas Street, near the market place, and the traffic and milk carts and other agricultural vehicles were quite terrific, I remember, because one milk cart ran over my little dog. I do remember that.

**Mr Doyle:** And killed the dog?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I am afraid so. I will not describe what I saw when it happened.

**Mr Doyle:** You say you spent a lot of time in Peel as a youngster. Young boys these days seem to play computer games and things of that nature to keep themselves occupied. What did young boys, when you were a boy, do?

**Mr Irving:** Well, we didn't have, as you say, computer games and we didn't have radio and television but one evening I was taken to the breakwater in Peel and taken, as a special treat, aboard the Manx Steam Packet boat The Mona to hear wireless and there I heard my first wireless broadcast. Goodness knows what it was but this sound was coming without wires. We used to play a lot of games that aren't played now. I remember one was these iron hoops, where boys had iron hoops with an iron sort of crook to guide the hoop and we used to go in gangs through the streets of Peel shouting and making a noise with these iron hoops and after the TT races we would wear numbers, cut a bit of cardboard on our back with the number and there would be great rivalry as to who was going to get the winner's number and so probably half a dozen would turn up with the same number of the fellow who had won the races. I had a great liking, in my spare time, for down in the harbour and Peel Hill. I loved Peel Hill because, one thing, I felt I had a right to go to Peel Hill because my great-uncle, a man called Allan Radcliffe, rented the hill for his sheep. So I used to play on the hill and I can always remember how fascinated I was, as a young boy, sitting on the hill on a still day and hearing all the talk on the quay, down below. My other interest in the hill of course was to go getting birds' eggs at the back of the hill. Every parent told their children in Peel, in those days, no going behind the hill to get seagulls' eggs because it was very dangerous and we used to get these eggs and put a hole at each end and blow them and the eggs were blown and, goodness knows what happened to them in the end. We also played a game in the winter which made quite a lot of shouting in the town from time to time. It was called smuggle your horn. I cannot remember what it was but it was an extremely popular game in Peel.

**Mr Doyle:** And the group of boys going round all the time, do you remember any of the other boys who were in the group?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I do. I remember my best friend at school probably was a fellow called Reggie Cannan. Now Reggie's father was a very important man in Peel because he had the rowing boats. So Reggie and I would spend most of the summer fooling about in the rowing boats. This man Cannan, his father, also was the coxswain of the lifeboat and my grandfather was chairman of the Peel branch committee, so I became very interested in the RNLI and even now, when I go to Peel and go passed the old bank building which, until recently, was the Post Office there, I think of the times I went there on flag day and after the church service

in the castle, the lifeboat service, to help count the money. It was inevitably a copper collection. Now and again one found a bit of silver in it but in those days I am afraid there were masses and masses of copper and I was allowed to help collect some of it.

**Mr Doyle:** And you say it was very busy down on the quay, mainly with the fishing fleet?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, in the summer it was busy on the quay with all the fishing boats and numerous Scottish boats came and used Peel in the summer for the herring fishing and of course along the quay, both sides of the quay almost, there were kipper yards and a lot of women working in the preparation of kippers. Yes, I do remember that and on the Promenade in Peel, or Shore Road as from the harbour to well along the front is known, there were the charabancs and all the tourists in the summer. As a boy I had a lot of pleasure in those days with certain visitors who were people who came to Peel for the summer almost and brought their children with them and it was, even at that age, pleasant to have these new friends from England to play with and these people came year after year to Peel and would either, in the main, rent a house or some accommodation like that.

**Mr Doyle:** For the whole of the summer?

**Mr Irving:** Well, as long as the children were not at school, certainly, yes. Now I am thinking... another activity of mine, I cannot sing a note, I am not musically inclined in any way, I never had been able to sing a note, and yet when I left Peel, also going to Canada, the local vicar, the Reverend Pakenham, wrote a letter which he wanted me to take with me to Canada for the new vicar of whichever church I went to and he had said how good a choir boy, what a wonderful choirboy I had been and I thought, like the case of the headmaster of the school, what a kind thing to do. I did not need a reference or anything, it was just a pleasant introduction which the manners of the day would carry out.

**Mr Doyle:** Would you go to church frequently?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I lived with my grandfather who went to church. I certainly went every Sunday morning with him and of course in those days he had a pew there with his name on and paid rent for it and some people did not like other people sitting in their pew but all that I believe, quite rightly, has stopped now. I went to the church in the morning on a Sunday and then to Sunday school in the afternoon. Now my family were a divided family in terms of denominations. My parents were Methodists and my grandparents were Church of England. I attended both Sunday schools off and on, especially just before the picnics which might take us to Glen Wyllin or St John's or Glen Maye

**Mr Doyle:** What transport would you use to get to St John's or -

**Mr Irving:** I think they would have rented charabancs or something like that. We are talking about between 70 and 82 years ago!

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** So you see, I was very ecumenically minded even in those days and the eminence of a picnic encouraged one to make sure you went to the right Sunday school at the time.

**Mr Doyle:** And what would you get up to on the Sunday school outings? Would there be entertainment or...?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, now there was some amusement place we were taken to? I cannot remember where it was. Like going to the fairground. I really cannot imagine but the idea of going out and having tea somewhere altogether and having fun on the charabanc.

**Mr Doyle:** And do you remember, going back to Peel Clothworkers, your school days, any major incidents at school at all?

**Mr Irving:** No, the only incident I ever remember was when this Mr Moore, in the middle of school assembly in the morning it would be, pointed at me and shouted 'Take that boy out' and I was taken out and I fainted. That is the only time I ever fainted in my life but he could

see, he told me afterwards, I was looking so pale -

**Mr Doyle:** You were going white?

**Mr Irving:** And... what do you call it? Anyway. Entertainment. There was a building, an old, wooden building down at the bottom of Stanley Road in Peel, that is where the Prom proper begins, it was known as the Albert Hall and it was occupied at least by a man called Howard Hughes and Howard Hughes used it as a cinema cum theatre but for the young people there were Saturday afternoon film matinees, largely serials of the Iron Man and Houdini and things like that and there was a tendency to go week after week to see what happened but it was gas operated. You see, there was very little electricity in Peel in those days, and Howard had a machine operated by gas for the film. I can remember when there had been a large delay in the film show while Howard went to pay his bill and get the gas reconnected but what a lot of people, everybody in Peel would recognise this, who lived at the time, when this film projector of Howard Hughes was operating, it had a very bad tendency to move the picture frames so that you got half of one frame and half of another frame and the great cry was, and it went on all the time, 'Up or down, Howard, up or down' and all these kids would shout 'Up or down, Howard.' The other cry was 'Close the door' because every time anybody came in, and they would come in, I think, without paying in the middle of the show, the place was flooded with light and you could not see the film. But 'Up or down, Howard.' I am sure there are still some people in Peel who would remember that. Then we had this gas, now there was a story in Peel at the time, the gaslights, you know, the man would go around with a big stick with a hook on the end, I think it was, to put the gaslights on. There was not any electricity in the streets. I am told, on bright, moonlight nights he would be sent word 'You need not bother to put them on tonight.' Now that was pretty common knowledge in Peel. Whether it was true... the statement was known. Whether it was true or not, I do not know. There is one thing I must mention. It is not a particularly pleasant thing but it just shows how, when we talk about incinerators and abattoirs and so on nowadays, there were I do not know how many slaughterhouses in Peel. Douglas Street in Peel, which is a major thoroughfare in Peel together with Michael Street, I can remember two slaughterhouses there. I can remember seeing boys go to these slaughterhouses with buckets to get a bit of blood for the garden. Now that is a horrible thought but it just shows how ideas have changed, and there we are.

**Mr Doyle:** Can you remember the meals you would have? What would you be eating in the day or in the evening? What was the food?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I will tell you. I suppose we had quite a bit of fish but one had to know where the fish had come from. Mackerel wasn't very popular, nor was callig and bloghan, but certainly not mackerel caught at the breakwater because of course the Peel sewer finished very close to the breakwater. So there was an enormous number of people who would not eat fish caught inshore but otherwise I suppose it was pretty plain food. I can remember things I have not seen for years such as pickled herrings and various other old fashioned dishes.

**Mr Doyle:** That would be regularly on the menu? Would that be quite common to be eating?

**Mr Irving:** I would think so, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you do any fishing yourself around Peel as a boy?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. Well, you know, a piece of string and a bent pin almost, from the breakwater. That was another place... I feel that many of us... In those days children were allowed to wander around Peel in a way they would not be allowed to nowadays, because of traffic for one thing but ideas have changed there too and back of the hill, which I have mentioned, and Peel breakwater were sort of forbidden places really. Everybody was always afraid we would climb on the wall of the breakwater and fall off.

**Mr Doyle:** But were there any incidents like that with children?

**Mr Irving:** No, I have never heard of one.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you remember, would there be a local bobby, a local policeman?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, we had a police station manned in Peel in those days. As I say, my, what would you call the step-grandfather, was inspector of police in Peel. His name was Faragher and in those days there were a lot of Faraghers in the police force. I think one of his brothers was superintendent in Douglas at the time, one was an inspector in Castletown and there were many others of lesser rank and it seemed at that time the Faraghers were monopolising the police force.

**Mr Doyle:** Would there be any markets held in Peel at all, do you remember?

**Mr Irving:** No, I do not remember any markets. You see, we are talking of between my birth and 12 now and there are an awful lot of things I do not remember.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you used to go over to the castle at all, Peel Castle, as a youngster?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, well we would go to the castle... You see, I mentioned life boat Sunday service there when a Mr Kelly always used to sing 'Throw out the life line', year after year, which I have not heard since and there would be various events in the castle. Sports on the tilting ground there.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you used to have to pay to get into the castle then?

**Mr Irving:** I do not know. I do not think so. There might have been a collection, you see, for the sports or something like that but I had quite a shock when I paid to go into the castle two or three years ago.

**Mr Doyle:** And although, I appreciate it is a long time ago and we are only dealing to the period from your birth to 12, but do you recollect any of the major characters around the town in those days?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, there was Billy Filleag who was a very odd gentleman. He always wore a big blanket or cloak, or something like that, and I believe filleag means that, cloak or a blanket and there was John somebody who had a barrel organ. He and his wife used to go around the town playing this barrel organ. I do not think they were greatly appreciated but... In small places like Peel you get to know the odd characters all right. Yes, sorry.

**Mr Doyle:** The rare trips that you take into Douglas, either on the train... Can you recollect any of those at all in the early days?

**Mr Irving:** I don't, no. I travelled on the train for two years much later in my life. I can remember those but I cannot remember the trips. I do know that what I remember most is coming in on a train to Douglas with my grandmother and walking up to Hawarden Avenue to see relations and then walking back and I thought this was a very long way to walk but that is my main impression.

**Mr Doyle:** And were you, as a youngster, a good boy around the house? Did you used to help with the household chores or -

**Mr Irving:** No.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you get into trouble for that or -

**Mr Irving:** No, no. I seem to have got away with a very happy time in spite of any failings I may have had, which I am sure I did have.

**Mr Doyle:** You mentioned the headmaster at the Clothworkers.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, Mr Moore.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there any other of the teachers that you remember from the Clothworkers?

**Mr Irving:** I remember a Mr Corlett. He taught us, amongst other things, woodwork. His widow died in Peel in the past few years. She was over 90 years old and her name was Dorcas Corlett.

But most of the other teachers in Peel, I just don't remember them.

**Mr Doyle:** And do you remember what things used to interest you at school? Were there particular subjects? I know it was a while ago and we are dealing with the early years but did you like woodwork?

**Mr Irving:** One thing I always remember about my school was we used to have geography lessons only on England, only on the United Kingdom, shall we say, and I got quite confused at a very early age between England and the Isle of Man. When we were talking about the river names or the River Thames that goes over there, you know, that sort of thing.

**Mr Doyle:** Was there no separate teaching of -

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. I can remember being taught all the usual subjects.

**Mr Doyle:** Would Manx history have been one of them? Do you remember anything about—

**Mr Irving:** No, I cannot remember what we were taught in Manx history. I know I have never... We would be taught some English history too but I have always been very bad at English history and because of my later youth in Canada I became very good at North American history without knowing what kings and queens and things they had in England.

**Mr Doyle:** Can you take us up now to 1926, just before you went to Canada?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, what happened was my mother had died, my father married again. This really did not affect me, no, because I was happy in both houses, my parents and my grandparents, but an aunt and uncle in America wanted to have children and they could not have children. My uncle came to Peel on holiday to see his parents and it was suggested that I go back for the summer with him and if I liked it there, this is what I was told, I do not know what the negotiations were, if I liked it there then I would stay there indefinitely.

**Mr Doyle:** We were just talking about just before you left for Canada in 1926. It was put to you that you could stay in Canada if you liked it.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was supposed to be if I liked it. If I went for the summer and I liked it, I could stay. Everybody seemed happy with that situation, so I went and I stayed for three and a half years and the only reason I came back was my uncle, who was city clerk and treasurer of a place in Canada, left that position, joined General Motors and had to go to India and they thought India was no place for a young boy of fifteen and a half. Well that was the story. They called it off for that. I do not know.

**Mr Doyle:** So that takes us from 1914 to 1926. What I did not ask was actually where you were born. You won't remember the place.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, where I was born. I was born in my grandfather's house which really was a very big place but downstairs was his draper shop in Douglas Street in Peel. So I was born right in the middle of Peel and had quite a big place to play in.

**Mr Doyle:** For the first 12 years? So you regarded Peel as a big playground really?

**Mr Irving:** Well I regarded this place as an excellent playground because there were rooms upstairs that were never used and you can imagine how young people get... saying we will have a little theatre in here or we do so and so. Change my bedroom nearly every night, shall we say.

**Mr Doyle:** And you had one brother?

**Mr Irving:** I had one brother, Frank.

**Mr Doyle:** When was your brother born?

**Mr Irving:** Frank was born... Sometimes I was two years older and sometimes he was three, so you can take your pick. And Jack is nine years.

**Mr Doyle:** Fine. Any sisters?

**Mr Irving:** He is a real Manxie, oh my God.

**Mr Doyle:** Younger?

**Mr Irving:** Nine years younger.

**Mr Doyle:** And any sisters?

**Mr Irving:** No.

**Mr Doyle:** Right, the next time we will cover the trip to Canada and from 1926 onwards if that is all right, unless you have got any other -

**Mr Irving:** No, you see the UK business, there is not much we want to say there.

**Mr Doyle:** The last time we met Mr Irving we covered from 1914 to 1926. If we could go to 1926 which is when I think you left the Isle of Man for Canada. Could you tell us something about that please?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. My uncle, a Mr Tom Cottier, who lived in Canada came home to Peel on holiday and I do not know what happened in the various discussions but I gather he suggested, as they had not any children, they would like me to go over to Canada for the summer and it was also said that if I liked it and got on well there it might be indefinitely. I was delighted to go. I left in June just after my twelfth birthday and this was a great adventure for a boy of 12, to go all the way to Canada: to Liverpool and on the liner Athenia to Montreal and going to a town about the size of Douglas. It was, for a boy, a wonderful change, everything was exciting. Life with motor cars, electricity, wonderful winter sports where I learned to ski and to skate and in the summer, the whole summer spent at a cottage they had by Lake Erie, where I learned to swim, and I remember that many people were surprised that I came from a small island community and could not swim. I should that say most of the fishermen in Peel at that time could not swim either and my aunt, who had a great influence on me, said: 'You will learn to swim right away and by the end of the summer you will have your Royal National Lifesaving Certificate.' So that encouraged me and helped me and then there was a lot of horse riding on the farm and so on. I really loved it. I remember three years later - I stayed there three and a half years - my aunt and uncle were moving to India and they did not think this a suitable place for me and that I was going back to the Isle of Man. I spent two months in New York on the 23rd floor of a hotel. We had an apartment and I used to look down at night at the lights of Broadway immediately below us and think, wouldn't it be nice to get back to Michael Street in Peel and I remember coming back in December to Michael Street in Peel and thinking, wouldn't it be nice to see Broadway again. So that was my Canadian experience at a most impressive time in my life.

**Mr Doyle:** So you were there from when you were 12 to 15?

**Mr Irving:** Fifteen and a half, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you miss your friends from Peel at all, from school or -

**Mr Irving:** Not really. I found such a wonderful life that I don't think I was ever homesick. I would have liked to have seen some friends and that but I was not pining to get back to the Isle of Man. Though once I knew I was coming back I could not get back quick enough.

**Mr Doyle:** So you came back in 1929?

**Mr Irving:** December '29, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And that was back to Peel?

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** What was the town in Canada where you were staying called?

**Mr Irving:** It was called Chatham, in southern Ontario.

**Mr Doyle:** And where did you go to school when you came back to Peel?

**Mr Irving:** I went to the High School, Douglas High School.

**Mr Doyle:** And what do you remember about Douglas High School?

**Mr Irving:** I liked Douglas High School. I had a great time there. I found some things a bit difficult. I did not know the first thing about English history, or indeed Manx history either, but I knew most of the battles with the Indians in North America and also there were subjects I had not taken in Canada. I had botany but I had not taken chemistry. There were various things but I liked it and I think kindly of all the masters of the day at the High School.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you remember the names of any of them?

**Mr Irving:** Well, the headmaster was a Mr Sykes who was obviously known as 'Bill' to the boys. There was another, a Mr Shimmin, who was known as 'Lanky', a great man. He gave me the cane more than anybody and I admired him more than anybody else.

**Mr Doyle:** What offences would you be getting the cane for? What did you have to do?

**Mr Irving:** There was a certain amount of 'you'. They used to call me Yank at times. 'You would not do this or do that. You are too scared.' 'You' that sort of thing, goading me and giving me wrong information and then they said this master's name was Mr Beetle but it wasn't because I stood up and called him Mr Beetle and there are people who went to the High School, if they are still around, will remember him as a Mr Greenwood!

**Mr Doyle:** And you got caned for that?

**Mr Irving:** No, I think he found it slightly amusing but I had something with Mr Greenwood at the end of my career at Douglas High School. I once asked him if I might leave the room and he said yes. I left the room. I never went back. I never went back to school and no one ever inquired about me. So I may not have been thought of any great importance there or perhaps they did not like me.

**Mr Doyle:** So you left school completely?

**Mr Irving:** I left school completely. I merely left the room. I had already taken books home and when I got home I said to my grandparents - I still lived with them - I said to them: 'I have retired from school because unless I study hard here for the next four weeks I am not going to get matriculation.' I think they felt that there might be a lot in that. So I stayed at home and studied and I got my matriculation but I was rather disappointed that no one banged on the door and said, 'Where is that boy?'

**Mr Doyle:** Would you be 15 or 16 at that stage?

**Mr Irving:** No, I would be maybe 16, 17.

**Mr Doyle:** Seventeen.

**Mr Irving:** I was a bit behind.

**Mr Doyle:** And did you get your matriculation?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I got my matriculation, yes. I was, after school, undecided in which career would I seek great fame. I did not know what I wanted to do except, when I had been in Canada, my uncle who was city clerk and treasurer got me interested in accountancy and financial matters so that I used to come into Douglas and a Mr Stanley Kermode, a local accountant, was kind enough to let me come to his house and he would teach me and give

me masses of homework which I would take home and I used to come in and see this gentleman so many times, cycling in from Peel of course, that in the end, after teaching me for, it must have been, over a year I said, Well, it is time you presented your bill' and he was kind enough to say, 'No, there is not going to be any bill.' So I always thought kindly of Mr Stanley Kermodé.

**Mr Doyle:** So you would cycle in from Peel to Douglas?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, he lived up in Malvern Road, I think, in Douglas. I used to cycle in from Peel in those days to go to the pictures in Douglas and sometimes, this was a great thing coming, I might have some fish and chips, I might go to the first house of the Picture House and the second house of the Strand. That was really living when you had come from Peel, to the big city. Well I could see my friends from the High School too, from my High School days.

**Mr Doyle:** And that was the main entertainment, going to the cinema on -

**Mr Irving:** Well no. It is one I remember particularly.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there any other areas of entertainment in Douglas or in Peel in those days?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I think even at that age we used to walk up and down Strand Street to see the girls. That was the main thing.

**Mr Doyle:** Had you met a girl friend?

**Mr Irving:** No, I do not think so. Well, I may have done. I do not know.

**Mr Doyle:** You are not making any admissions on that!

**Mr Irving:** I would admit that but I certainly could not remember who any of them were now. I am a very old man.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you remember your friends from the High School, any of the names of the people who you were friendly with at the High School, the boys?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, unfortunately several of them have died. There was Harry Bregazzi who died quite recently. Athol Buxton who also died. Another I was very friendly with was Frank Cringle who lives in Ramsey now. Of course there were other people I knew. I am not mentioning their names in case it is suggested they are as old as I am, but they were at school at the same time, people like Cyril Standen and Norman James, the former dentist. Those are a few I think of at the moment.

**Mr Doyle:** And was it usual for the transport from Peel to Douglas, you would use the bike or would you use the bus?

**Mr Irving:** Well, the buses were there but I needed the money for other pleasures in Douglas, you see.

**Mr Doyle:** Exactly.

**Mr Irving:** I means this is quite a while ago. I am talking about, from 1929 to 1933. The buses were running fine, yes. I don't think there evening trains because, don't forget, I did have a pass on the train. I used to go from Peel to the High School every day on the train. I think the train took 45 minutes to do the ten miles so you can work a speed out from that.

**Mr Doyle:** How long does it take on a bike?

**Mr Irving:** Ah ha! I don't know. I cannot remember. I do remember we walked from Douglas Station up to St Ninian's in all weathers. I don't begrudge children having transport nowadays. If my standard of living has improved there is no reason why theirs shouldn't too. I used to get in trouble on the train, I was reminded about this recently, for going from one carriage to another between stations while the train was running. There was a fair amount of that anyway.

**Mr Doyle:** Any accidents? You survived.

**Mr Irving:** No.

**Mr Doyle:** And would there be dances or dinners?

**Mr Irving:** Oh well, yes. I more or less, in the summer, lived at the Kingwood Baths. You know the baths on the headland, not the ones that were in the Promenade, and as an asthmatic it always amazed me that at every one of these swimming galas, both in Peel and Port Erin, I always won the plate diving. That was diving and swimming underwater picking up metal plates.

**Mr Doyle:** Was that training in Canada? Did you used to do -

**Mr Irving:** I think it may have been, yes, but for an asthmatic it is a bit unusual. I must say, and this is naughty for an asthmatic to do it but I did smoke a bit and I had a deal, an arrangement, with the man who owned the baths, Mr Charles Cain of Peel, that when I won I would exchange the prize for a packet of cigarettes each time.

**Mr Doyle:** So there was an incentive there.

**Mr Irving:** Another thing I found very interesting was I spent lots of time rowing away in small boats in Peel and fishing on the breakwater.

**Mr Doyle:** Is that the mackerel and the callig?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, catching my own. I don't know if I was very good but I certainly have always enjoyed fishing.

**Mr Doyle:** And on the career that you were mapping out, you were doing the accountancy. Did you want to become an accountant?

**Mr Irving:** No, I wasn't. I felt that if one is in any commercial activity almost that some knowledge of accountancy is a good thing and then, in 1933, I was offered a job in an office in London, the Vauxhall Motors Finance Corporation, sort of hire purchase side, and I was offered this splendid job of office boy at £2 a week. Nowadays one thinks that £2 a week, you can't do very much on that but that was the only money I ever had and I had a great time and beer was tuppence a half pint in the canteen.

**Mr Doyle:** And where did you stay in London?

**Mr Irving:** In digs. I got my digs for £1 a week but that did not include lunches. It didn't included clothes and all sorts of things but -

**Mr Doyle:** Did you want to leave the Island or was it there were just no job opportunities on the Island then or... What was the position?

**Mr Irving:** To really work that one out... I think, you see, most days it is quite surprising, say in 1933 or the early 30s, how people were encouraged to go away to get a good job and thank goodness everybody does not have to do it today, or it is not so prevalent today there are so many good jobs here, and I loved getting away. I loved being in these digs in London. I thought this is really living.

**Mr Doyle:** And did you remain in contact with your parents throughout that time?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, although I keep saying I lived with my grandparents and my aunt and uncle in Canada, we have always been very close together. We kept in touch of course, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** So how long did you spend in the UK?

**Mr Irving:** Well, in 1939 I was called up into the army. Before the war I joined a territorial regiment in London. I was very lucky to get in because of my asthma and the doctor who examined me said, 'Well, we will chance it and see how you get on but you won't be able to go

overseas, nor the tropics or anything like that.' So I was deemed non tropical and I got in an anti-aircraft unit and served there in London and then I went to an officer training unit, now called the Royal College of Military Science, and I was commissioned. Now one of many things I applied for was the Royal Marines when I was at this training unit and I even put Royal Marine buttons and badges on my new officers uniform and then the question of medical category came up and I lost that. Then I served in London for the blitzes there, in Coventry and I just got into Glasgow in time for their blitz and then I was posted to the Shetland Islands. In the Shetlands I was surprised at the number of people there who said do you know so-and-so and gave me a Manx name and I would said, 'No, I don't think I do but do you know him?' 'Oh yes, comes here fishing' and I found it is not a question of comes here fishing but rather many, many years ago he used to come and the number of Manx boats that used to go... I am talking mainly about the Peel ones because they knew where there fellows came from, from Peel or Port St Mary, wherever it was, and I am quite amazed at how many Manx boats used to go all the way to the Shetlands. I enjoyed the Shetlands. I was a lieutenant and I was put on an island with three second-lieutenants. Now that is good, you see, that made me the commander-in-chief and I was given four 3.7 inch guns and told you will defend this island by land, sea and air. What a wonderful job, eh! Except no one came to fight! May I just say, after that I had several jobs and then I was intelligence officer for certain brigades in southeast England, shall we say, eastern England, particularly in connection with the flying bombs and the rockets. The flying bombs were called divers because the engine stopped and they dived to the ground and the big rockets, terrible things, they were called Big Ben. So I had a lot of time in intelligence work there and then the Colonel at the War Office heard that I spent my time in the army in his unit studying economics so I was invited to go to the War Office and deal with economic affairs in the ex-Italian colonies and I said, 'Why have you picked me?' and he said, 'You may not know a lot about economics but you are smart enough to know who to ask, which government departments in London and so on' and he said, 'Furthermore, and probably more important, you are very good at cutting corners and you are very good at getting up some of the dirty work we have got to do.' So that was the war time but I suppose I ought to mention that during that time I got married.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** So I was married in 1941.

**Mr Doyle:** And where did the ceremony take place?

**Mr Irving:** In Luton, in Bedfordshire. Where Vauxhall Motors is.

**Mr Doyle:** Tell us a little bit about how you met your wife as well.

**Mr Irving:** Well, she lived nearby. I was living in Harpenden which is near Luton and she lived nearby and I would see her nearly every day and that is how I met her. I will be a perfect gentleman and say she is a bit younger than I am!

**Mr Doyle:** Do you remember proposing to your wife?

**Mr Irving:** Ye-es.

**Mr Doyle:** Are you going to let us into any secrets there?

**Mr Irving:** Well, there aren't any secrets. No, there are no secrets about it. I really wanted to marry her. I had never felt this before and she was kind enough to say yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And how long had you known her before you proposed?

**Mr Irving:** Oh, it depends how well. I mean, I knew of her and said good morning and hello to her for several years before I knew her.

**Mr Doyle:** And did you plan, did you discuss with your wife about coming back to the Island? Was that your plan to come back to the Isle of Man or had you made any plans at that stage?

**Mr Irving:** Well, you see, I was at the War Office until March 1948, when we came back to the Island. I

did not want to go back to Vauxhall Motors, or Vauxhall Finance. This happened to so many people during the war and not only were people thinking about they wanted a change but, you know, in the Isle of Man so many people go away to get a job and when they get married and particularly when they have children, it is amazing the numbers who come back. There is a desire to come back and it happens then and I suppose I had it too. I came back and my brother, who became a major in the Royal Signals, Frank Irving, he decided that he wanted to have a business here selling catering equipment and supplies to hotels, cafes, boarding houses, restaurants, you know, that sort of thing, and while I was in England... Oh go on, I will confess it, while I was at the War Office he would say to me do you mind going and seeing some people in the East End and asking them if they can let me have some goods because it was difficult to get everything in those days and I got quite interested and I came back and I joined my brother who was the founder of the firm in Prospect Hill.

**Mr Doyle:** That was Irvings?

**Mr Irving:** And my wife was brave enough to agree to come. That was Irvings, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did she take much persuading to come to the Isle of Man?

**Mr Irving:** No, she had been. We spent our honeymoon here so she had some idea of what it was like and when we came here we came by boat of course from Fleetwood, wasn't it? Yes. And I tried to get a cabin and I got the carpenter's cabin, I think, which was almost at the bottom of the boat, right down low, and it was very, very rough. Even so she came back.

**Mr Doyle:** She was not put off.

**Mr Irving:** No.

**Mr Doyle:** So, as we speak now, you have been married for over 55 years?

**Mr Irving:** Fifty five years, yes. We have had two children and three grandchildren.

**Mr Doyle:** And when you came back to the Island, was that 1948?

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Where did you live?

**Mr Irving:** We lived in a flat first of all in Albany Road. Then I got a house in Ballabrooie and then we wanted more room because my wife's mother, who had been widowed then and we wanted her to live with us, so we moved to Belmont Road, in 1963. So I must have been in Ballabrooie quite a while then, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And when you came back to the Isle of Man in 1948 were you working in Irvings then. That was a partnership with your brother?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, with my brother, yes, and I loved it.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you want to tell us anything about the early days at Irvings?

**Mr Irving:** No, except that the early days were... the main thing was getting things and not selling which is a very nice position to be in, I suppose in a way, for someone who is selling things. It was terribly difficult to get crockery, machinery, electric potato peelers and things like that, cafe water boilers.

**Mr Doyle:** Mr Irving, when we last met I think we finished with a reference to the start up of Irvings, the business. Can you tell us a little bit more about how that developed and how much time you spent within the business?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, certainly. I spent all my working time in the business and of course as we started in Prospect Hill we soon realised the place to be was where the people were, down in the

Strand Street area and gradually we moved down there and eventually we got much bigger premises in Duke Street. Business went very well but it was apparent later that the tourism, after the original boom immediately after the war, wasn't doing very well but then our customers were more than just when we were originally called the Caterers Equipment Company. Our main business was hotels, boarding houses and restaurants but then we started to supply other places like the hospital, schools and so on, and the more we got of these larger customers, we were able to buy more of any particular commodity and get much better terms and though it helped us of course to have increased sales, it also, I think, reduced the cost to our customers of quite a few things.

**Mr Doyle:** And then later on - I might be jumping a few years here - but I think it was in 1953 that you organised the first large trade exhibition.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Could you tell us something about that?

**Mr Irving:** I do not know why I thought of that one but I was determined that it should be for Manx businesses only and apart from... Someone is going to dispute that if I don't say that we did allow certain people, mainly manufacturers of small, shall we say, kitchen gadgets and so on to take small stands at these exhibitions and demonstrate them and people tell me they found that a great attraction, to see these things demonstrated. I'd tried to interest as many people and organisations in the Island as I could. I got many organisations such as the Womens Institute to take a part of the gallery in the Palace Ballroom and all sorts of people were good enough to cooperate and the first exhibition in 1953, the Palace Company personnel - we had rented of course the ballroom at the Palace from the Palace Company - they kept a note of the number of people attending and they told me afterwards that 34,096, I think it was, people.

**Mr Doyle:** How many days was that over?

**Mr Irving:** Well, we would open on a Saturday morning and go through until the next Saturday evening, so it was eight days but we would not be open on the Sunday.

**Mr Doyle:** Thirty-four thousand people?

**Mr Irving:** Yes and they were their figures, not figures I would use to sell stands in future years. They were theirs, not mine.

**Mr Doyle:** And did people have to pay to get in?

**Mr Irving:** No, no, there was no question of paying to get in and I remember the first one we had in 1953, in the form an attraction I hired the replicas of the Crown Jewels and they proved very popular indeed. But throughout the years from '53 to '61 inclusive, we had it every two years, I tried to get as many sort of attractions as I could and I must say I was, certainly in those days, very honourable to the cause of Manx trade because there were United Kingdom companies who were prepared to pay quite a lot to get into these, what appeared to be, successful exhibitions but no, it must be Manx, it must be to promote local trade, either manufacturing or selling. I remember on another one of the years, I can't remember now which years specific things happened in, I remember one year I arranged with a gentleman, a local man actually, Mr Peter Downward, now Major-General Downward, was in the Army Air Corps at the War Office and I arranged to have two helicopters to be sent over, one I kept inside for people to have a close look at it and the other one they let me use to ferry the Chairman of Port Erin Commissioners, Ramsey, Peel and so on in from the Market Square, or wherever it was, to the Palace Ballroom lawn to visit the exhibition. They closed the school in Ramsey when the Ramsey Mayor was coming which indicated to me there hadn't been many helicopters on the Island up to then and then on another occasion I arranged for the helicopter to pick up the Governor on the lawn of Government House and land him on the Calf of Man, he said he would like to see one of his outer dominions, and anyway he had friends over at the time and we all met at the Sound Cafe there and they did a little ferry service and quite a few people were taken over to the Calf of Man.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, so there was quite a spectacular event. The trade exhibition was quite a spectacular event. Was there an incident with Governor Garvey and a Peel motor car?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. There was a Peel motor car, a tiny little vehicle and I asked him if he would open the exhibition again, I think it was again, and arrive in a little motor car. Sir Ronald Garvey was a great sport. He was a sport and a showman and would do anything to promote tourism, in fact, do anything to promote the Isle of Man. He was really splendid that way, as I assume he was in every way.

**Mr Doyle:** And he turned up in the Peel motor car to open the exhibition?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, we put the car at the bottom of Summerhill and he drove along the Prom into the Palace Ballroom and we had done a sort of slipway for him to get up on the stage - slipway, that is a lifeboat term, isn't it - up onto the stage and he was very pleased to get out of the car where the microphone was to open the show. That one year. Another year I wanted trains to take people from Peel, Ramsey and Port Erin into Douglas, on different days of course, leaving the towns in the morning and take the people back in the afternoon, all for free. So I asked the railway company who I found very cooperative about these exhibition expresses and they said they would do it and I pointed out to them that they have got to be prepared to take everybody who turns up on the station for a free trip and they said, well, the total charge would be £25.

**Mr Doyle:** For the three trains?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I was careful not to say 'each' because they had made it quite clear that it did clobber them in the end, I could see, and some time after the exhibition, I'll say a gentleman, I think it was the manager, phoned me and said they had given me a bad quote as far as they were concerned and I thought, oh dear, I wonder how much they want then, how much it ought to have been, and they said we would be very happy if instead of £25 you made it £35 and I thought, good gracious me, three trains, backwards and forwards to Douglas for anybody who turns up for £35 -

**Mr Doyle:** A bargain.

**Mr Irving:** I can't believe they made anything and it can't be just the different value of money, it was a bargain, as you say.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, there were all these spectacular events to get the exhibition off and to get people ....

**Mr Irving:** To get people there.

**Mr Doyle:** And also to get them interested in the Isle of Man. I have read an awful lot about a mermaid competition. Can you tell us something about that?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, dear, oh dear. I keep being asked about the mermaid competition. I was President of the Douglas Angling Club and we had a dinner at the Palace Hotel and someone produced a lure, you know, which goes on the end by the hook to lure the fish, which was a lovely little mermaid lure and this was passed around for everybody to look at and it raised the subject of mermaids. So when I was speaking after dinner about our summer competitions, we were having a big competition, I think it was called Master Angler of Man and we wanted people to come over - it was not just for the club - I said that I would give a prize for anybody who caught a mermaid and I think someone said how much or what is it going to be and I said, 'Shall we say £10,000?' and the local press heard about this and one fellow in the local press said, 'Look, if you make that £20,000,' it was a great deal of money for me to find, wasn't it, 'If you will make it £20,000 I will guarantee you international publicity.' So I said, 'All right, £20,000 it is.' And I remember saying too, 'Don't confuse me with Sir Harry Lauder who offered so many thousand pounds to the first person to swim the Atlantic non stop. Mine isn't that sort of joke, you know.' So all the way through I played it quite seriously. I went to Granada to talk about it on television and the fellow was quite amused, who was interviewing me, that he could not make me break down and say, 'Well, it is just a joke.' Anyway I got publicity from all over the world

about it. Someone offered to sell me one, I think, some fellow in Scotland but people wrote to me from abroad, people I know and had heard it on the radio or something like that, saying it was a very stunt. In the end, I won't go into a lot of detail, the BBC came over to do a piece on it, this was when it was sort of fading out, and I had arranged to have a mermaid with a mermaid tail I got from a film company on the rocks near the airport and the stewardess on the plane to say, 'What is that down there on the rocks?' and make sure the mermaid was well out of the way by the time the plane landed! Unfortunately the gentleman in charge of the BBC, it was his birthday and we all had too much to drink, I think, and after a wonderful luncheon did not get to the spot.

**Mr Doyle:** And you got a lot of support, didn't you, from the Governor and the Bishop. There is reference to the Governor and the Bishop?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, the Governor was very good. He wrote to a friend of his who was Governor of some Pacific Island about mermaids and said he thought they were mainly mermen in Manx waters and would the Governor of this island send some of his mermaids over and the Governor replied, the Governor of the Island, not this Island, the Pacific, replied and said, 'I would but it would conflict with our white slave traffic Act' which I thought was a very good reply. But there again this was another example of that Governor, Garvey, who was great for getting us the publicity.

**Mr Doyle:** And the Bishop? Was there some support of the church?

**Mr Irving:** The Bishop of the day said that he believed inter alia in mermaids but the Archdeacon of the day denied it and said to a very big meeting of a conference of women here that it was all rubbish and there weren't such things as mermaids. So when the women were leaving, the day they were leaving from the airport, I put a big sign on Fairy Bridge saying 'Archdeacon unfair to mermaids. Women and half women of the world unite' which went down very well.

**Mr Doyle:** Very good and no one ever caught a mermaid?

**Mr Irving:** No, but you see, what helped my story, when I was in Peel, the night after making this offer at the angling dinner, I went to a potatoes and herring do in Peel and the Mayoress, I will call her that, wife of the chairman of the commissioners, mentioned something and said she had seen a mermaid and Wing Commander MacDonald said he'd seen a mermaid and someone else, with a sort of position in the community, said they had, so this helped my publicity effort and then later the president of the British society which would deal with fairy tales and mermaids and all that sort of thing, I don't know what the word would be now, he came over and he said to me Sir Arthur Waugh said, 'Tell me, before we begin, Mr Irving, do you believe in mermaids?' and I said, 'No, sir.' So he said, 'That's good. We know where we stand now.' He said, 'It is very interesting that your people here should say that these mermaids they saw near Peel Castle on the rocks there, that the mermaids had red hair.' He said, 'They haven't red hair, you know. They wear a red cap and if you want to catch the mermaid you have got to get that cap.' So I said, 'Oh yes, it is all good publicity.'

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, because there is an awful lot of publicity that is in the papers and letters from around the world and people coming over and it was really promoting the Island worldwide.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, we did fake one or two things but no, I mean... I got a PR man in London, a public relations man for the Island to put an advertisement in the Telegraph asking for people to make up a team to come and catch the mermaid and so on and various things. He got quite a lot of publicity in London. But there we are.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes and again -

**Mr Irving:** You're spending a lot of time on this -

**Mr Doyle:** No, it is an interesting anecdote. It shows how you were attracting people to the Island in the early days. (Laughter)

**Mr Irving:** Well, it is a pleasant story for the Island.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, but it doesn't stand alone with... it's unfair to call them stunts, but popular ways of attracting people because there are a few other competitions that were brought in... The Miss Isle of Man competition was another one.

**Mr Irving:** Oh, you mean at the exhibitions.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** At the exhibitions, oh yes, we had various things and another evening, I advertised beforehand of course, that on, say, Wednesday or what would it be, it would be perhaps, yes, say a Tuesday evening there was going to be a picture taken of all the Kellys of the Isle of Man. Did we get 200, 300?

**Mr Doyle:** Three hundred, it says in the paper, yes.

**Mr Irving:** Three hundred are on this picture taken in the Palace Ballroom of the Kellys of the Isle of Man and I said if everybody came back to the exhibition on, say, the Friday evening they would all get a postcard size copy of the picture and that went very well and I also said that there would be a large picture six feet by four, I think, enlargement of the original picture on the wall for them to see. I even got on to the British Interplanetary Society and got them to send me a great big plastic covered model of the sputnik which had been in space at the time. On one occasion, it is a bit old now, but there was a woman called Lady Docker in England who had a gold Rolls Royce and I phoned her up and asked her if I could borrow it for the exhibition, 'Certainly, my dear, but it won't be available until next month.' So you see, one has to try all these things.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and they were very successful, I think, the exhibitions as letters from the Governor to yourself say how excellent they were.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I think they helped trade. In fact the exhibitors were very pleased afterwards in the way it had gone. Probably had some other stunts too, but those were the things I remember.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and was the tourist industry thriving then or was it declining, where are we, in the 50s?

**Mr Irving:** Well, if we take '53, yes, it was in '53 because we had had this boom, as I mentioned, just after the war and then it started to go down and people were getting greatly concerned. In 1954 the papers were full of 'Isn't it a pity our tourism industry is dying when it ought to be increasing' and it represented a very high percentage of our national income, not the government's income but everybody's income, either directly or indirectly from tourism. I had had some experience in Libya, which I referred to earlier, of the advantage of getting a working party going of the right people and so I suggested to my brother that we write to the paper and suggest there ought to be what we were really aiming for - Together with our letter to the newspaper we sent a cheque for £100. Now I know it sounds silly but we wanted to show that we were prepared to pay a bit towards it. Then we found there were a lot of people who were interested in this, in doing something, getting going and trying to revive the tourist industry and the current thing in those days, there were people forming action groups on all sorts of things in the United Kingdom so we decided to form an action group -

**Mr Doyle:** In 1954?

**Mr Irving:** In 1954 and then we decided we would start with a big public meeting and we held one in the Villa Marina and we didn't expect many people to turn up but I believe the newspaper says 800 people arrived. It was snowing. For the Isle of Man there was quite deep snow on the road by the time the meeting was being held and this was a very encouraging sign that so many people were prepared to come out on a very bad night to the Villa and talk about tourism. We had invited quite a number of members of the House of Keys there and one particular aim we had was to get some member of the House of Keys to promise to propose in Tynwald Court a commission of people who knew a bit about tourism, preferably from the UK, to be set up and report to Tynwald on action to be taken for the promotion of tourism in the Isle of Man.

**Mr Doyle:** This was part of what was described as Operation Progress?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. Before I mention the Operation Progress I think it is better just to tell you that our aim too was to get someone, as I have said, to propose this in Tynwald. We tried one or two members and then Mr Jack Nivison was good enough to put it forward in Tynwald. Now it went through Tynwald of course and when the commission was appointed we were delighted that it was, it consisted of people well experienced in tourism in the British Isles, shall we say. I think the Director of the English Tourist Board was there and people from the British Tourist Authority and so on. Now we had, at the meeting, distributed what we called a thing called Operation Progress. That was what we thought ought to be done to revive the tourist industry. One of the problems in the Isle of Man has always been if you say to someone, 'What do you think ought to be done' they generally have one theme in mind and say if you do that, nothing to worry you, flood the Island with tourists. Now it's hard to believe that one thing is going to do that and we were determined to advance on a broad front. Also, if you advance on a broad front you have much more chance of getting pretty Island-wide support, so this Operation Progress proposed quite a lot of things and there were not just, as some people at the time said, limited opening of the pubs on a Sunday in the afternoon and visitors should be able to buy cigarettes after 1 o'clock. Now that sounds silly but it was illegal for any sweet shop or any shop that was open to sell cigarettes and tobacco and so on on a Sunday after 1 o'clock and there weren't all the machines that came a few years later, where you put your money in and get cigarettes, but we were using that saying that people should have the same freedom from restrictions here as they would get at home at least, but we were most anxious to get a big new swimming pool instead of the old Noble Baths which were in a dreadful state. So we put in this proposal, a new swimming pool for Douglas and that of course came about: even that the boat should sail on Sunday and that came about too. Also we wanted more wet weather amenities and I suppose Summerland could have been the result of that with people being interested in that. Some people were talking about a casino. We were very reluctant to go for the casino, most of us, because we felt there would be a lot of objection to that which might damage the overall approach but they weren't just things just for Douglas, this was an Island thing and we wanted all sorts of things happening all over the Island, not just in Douglas. We wanted the Forestry Board to do more in planting trees for amenity purposes and I sort of forget most of the things that were in this Operation Progress but the amazing thing is that these things were proposed by the commission that was set up and most of them came about and I would not say they all came about because of the action group, it was because people were really interested at the time and getting a bit desperate and were determined to have a go at a revived tourism.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, because from the newspaper articles, if I could just give you a quote here. One of the newspaper articles was saying 'No body of men and women in recent years has met greater criticism and resistance in their ideas than the action group but they caught the mood of the Island and they were right.' Did you have some resistance in the early days?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, you see, let's say the Labour Party, I suppose, it was the only party in existence actually, the Labour Party felt that the action group was going to be a political organisation that would put candidates up at elections and so on, not just for the House of Keys but for local authorities as well and we were determined that it wouldn't be a political organisation, except unfortunately in 1955 a member of the Keys for North Douglas died and a number of people said to me, 'You've got a lot to say about the revival of tourism, here's your chance' you see. Now I don't know why but I did stand and I was elected and the next year Mr Bill Quayle, JP, who was chairman of the action group said 'I've got to be chairman', jokingly, 'because you don't even know what an amendment is!' I didn't then, I suppose. No, I wanted Bill to be chairman. He stood in 1956, the next year, and he was elected so we had two members of the action group in the Keys and I was the leader on even days and he was the leader on odd days, so it worked very well!

**Mr Doyle:** Before we go into some more detail on the... It was the April 1955, that was the first election, I think, that you stood for in North Douglas.

**Mr Irving:** That is right, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Before we go into that, what interested me and may interest others, the meeting of the action

group that took place in the bad weather conditions where a lot of people were turning up, it struck me as really being ahead of its time. You had roving mikes going around the audience for people to speak. You had red lights that went on after people had been speaking for more than five minutes on the platform. Who organised it all?

**Mr Irving:** Well, the person most likely to, the poor fellow is dead now, was Donald Lowey who was a real live wire in Douglas. He had a wholesale food business, providing hotels and boarding houses, and of course it was just the sort of thing he would do. He organised the first of the Douglas Carnivals. He was a real goer, Donald, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and the members, there was yourself and your brother, Mr T H Colebourn....

**Mr Irving:** Members of what?

**Mr Doyle:** Of the action group.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, we had eventually hundreds of members.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, but I mean the forming members, if you like, the people who sat together and said we are going to have an action group, we are going to have a meeting, let's end this apathy.

**Mr Irving:** There were people at the first meeting who gave us a lot of encouragement. I wouldn't mention their names

**Mr Irving:** A meeting which was held, I remember in the pubs on that when we were forming it, there were certain people there who we did not see much of afterwards but were always encouraging and kept in the background so that I would not like to mention their names and quite a few prominent people in the Isle of Man got in touch with me and said, 'Good luck to you and keep going. If you want some help quietly, let me know.'

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, because someone who actually came out and supported you and it is covered by the papers -

**Mr Irving:** One was a Deemster actually.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, oh really! Which Deemster -

**Mr Irving:** I'm not saying because if he wanted to remain in the background, he must be allowed to now.

**Mr Doyle:** Excellent. One of the people who came out openly, I think, was the Speaker of the House of Keys, Sir Joseph Qualtrough. He was seen openly to be supporting the action group.

**Mr Irving:** Was he? Yes, he was, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And T H Colebourn was involved with the action group, was he?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, T H... Yes, he was. He was involved in everything we did, I think. I do not know if we had an executive committee or anything but, oh yes.

**Mr Doyle:** The first, the big meeting at the Villa with the dreadful weather, you were drumming up support and getting energetic support from the floor and talking about a meeting on this scale has never been held on the Island before, we are making history, we demand progress -

**Mr Irving:** We didn't say that, did we?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, it is in your speech, Mr Irving! (Laughter) Drumming up support. Can you remember, did you go away from that meeting feeling optimistic that you had support?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** So it was a good meeting?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I mean we would have gone away feeling optimistic if we only had 80, let alone 800, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And did you, after that meeting, think I should be standing for the Keys, I should be .....

**Mr Irving:** No, no.

**Mr Doyle:** How were you persuaded?

**Mr Irving:** No, it was when the vacancy arose later the next year. I can't remember the details now but I know some of them said, 'Now is our chance. You can go and say this, these sort of things in the House of Keys and Tynwald and we get publicity for what we want to do and we might persuade some of them to...'

**Mr Doyle:** Did you need a lot of persuading?

**Mr Irving:** When I did get in, I see, according to press reports, I asked the Governor to dissolve the House of Keys because they were a useless bunch! (Laughter)

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, yes. Did you need a lot of persuading to stand for the Keys the first time?

**Mr Irving:** It was a bit difficult, yes, because my brother and I were partners in the business and what happened was I worked on books, shall we say, in the evening and on the weekends but this was all very well but as time went on more and more time was required from members until it almost became as it is now, a full time job, and now I suppose you could say that members get sufficient money to pay somebody to stand in for them. That could be said but in those days my pay was £200 a year. Now even in 1955 and '56 and so on it wasn't very much but it was taking so much time that just before the 1962 general election I said, 'Well that's it. I just cannot afford to...' And it was quite unfair, it would have been unfair to my brother that I should be taking so much time off. It did worry me very much.

**Mr Doyle:** The first one in April 1955, just for the record, in North Douglas, it was Irving 4,085 votes and Stephen, Labour, 1,645. That was a pretty convincing turnout for you.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, well you see that was at the height of the revive tourism. I should think my manifesto probably didn't mention anything but tourism.

**Mr Doyle:** But did you expect to win that election with no problem at all? Was that your expectation?

**Mr Irving:** No, heck no. I don't know. I remember I was listening to the radio early one morning in bed and I heard that Mr Stephens was standing for a Labour Party because sometimes with by-elections there wasn't that much time to go, you see. There was a general election the next year so some people would say it is not worth it.

**Mr Doyle:** And you would have been an independent, not backed by... or an action group candidate?

**Mr Irving:** Oh no, no, no. Oh no, they knew damned well, they knew very well that I was not bound by any action group policy, no.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you go round calling at all the houses and speaking to all the constituents.

**Mr Irving:** Yes. I have always hated canvassing and I have had seven elections, I think, and I have lost one. I hated canvassing. You probably won't believe this, I am a very shy person who puts on a brave front, I do. I have joined them in the Keys publicly this and in Tynwald.

**Mr Doyle:** You are right. I don't believe it but -

**Mr Irving:** Well, you may not believe it but I never asked anybody to vote for me. I never said, 'Will you vote for me?' I have never asked anybody to help me in elections, just because I am too shy, and I would press the bell on the door and if they did not come within ten seconds, shall we say, stick my visiting card through the door that I'd called because I thought, oh dear, you know. I have called to hundreds and hundreds of houses and I will say this for

the people of the Isle of Man, no one has ever been rude to me. They might have thought, oh, I wouldn't vote for him if he was the only person available, but no one was rude to me. People are very polite in the Isle of Man whereas in England... Well, of course, elsewhere they have the excuse, well I am Labour and you are Conservative, or I am something else.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. Was the Labour Party quite big in the Island in the 50s, in 1955?

**Mr Irving:** I don't know. Bert Stephens I liked, he was a heck of a nice fellow and he was well known. He was a journalist.

**Mr Doyle:** It was a clean campaign, no criticism of the other side?

**Mr Irving:** No, it was the '56 campaign that was a bit hard because I attacked my friend Mr Bolton and Mr Quine. Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. We will come on to that one but on the 1955 campaign when you were elected, do you remember how you felt when you took your seat in the House of Keys? Were you happy to be there?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, but I told them in Tynwald when left, I didn't know the press was there, we were just winding everything up when I was there for the last few minutes and I was speaking, I pointed out that I always felt very nervous about public speaking and, you know, feel in my tummy, oh shall I really speak on this subject. Now if it is of some importance to me I would but there have been many an occasion when I have thought oh no, I don't think I will. But I put on a brave front.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, you say that. I am not going to allow you to get away with this modesty, Mr Irving, -

**Mr Irving:** It is not modesty.

**Mr Doyle:** Because there was an incident at Tynwald in July 1956 - at St John's.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Where you were bold and fearless, there was no sign of modesty or shyness, where it was Mr Cowin, a former MLC and a member of the Manx Bar, who wanted to present a petition. What happened? Can you tell me more about this?

**Mr Irving:** I don't know what was in the petition. I don't know what happened to Mr Cowin. I didn't know Mr Cowin. I had heard of him of course but I gather he was... Let's say life was made impossible for him ..... in Tynwald for some reason, I don't know what he did. I am not going to say he was asked to resign or he resigned because he was fed up with it. Life was made impossible in some way for him. I do not know whether he was in the right or the wrong but when we were standing round in the so-called robing room off Tynwald Church there, St John's Church, the Governor came in and said, 'I am refusing to accept a petition from a Mr Cowin today' and some of the members started to talk about it. I was the new boy and didn't know what the heck it was all about, they did, and then on the Hill, after the service, it was announced the procession would go back to the Church and they started to read out on the loud speakers four constables of the Isle of Man Constabulary and then I think the next was the members of the House of Keys. Now it is nothing to do with seniority in the Keys, it was just I happened to be in a position where I had to lead them off and across the little path from me was the Speaker of the House of Keys and I didn't move. I decided I wasn't going to move, so the Speaker said, 'Come along, Mr Irving', and I said, 'No, sir, I am not leaving the Hill until this man has presented his petition.' So there was a long pause then and I didn't know it but some members of the Keys had resumed their seats on the Hill behind me, I couldn't see them, which I would have felt a bit happier if I had known at the time and then after a period the Governor said, 'In that case, Mr Irving, you had better go and get the petition.' So I thought ah, that's good, so I could go down to where this man was standing on the other side of the low wall at the foot of Tynwald Hill and I noticed he had plain clothed policemen on either side so I said, 'Good morning, Mr Cowin, please ignore your company on either side here, I have come to collect your petition for the Governor.' He said, Oh, I have sent it to

Government Office.’ I think my words were, ‘Have you any paper you wish to present to the Governor?’ and he said, ‘No, thank you.’ So I went back and said to the Governor, ‘Mr Cowin has sent his petition to Government Office’ and the Governor said, ‘Thank you, Mr Irving’ and that was it, except the next meeting of Tynwald it was decided that the question of petitions at Tynwald should be gone into and Mr Cowin appeared there and he told me in the foyer that he was grateful for the help I had given him and the support I was giving him then and I pointed out to him, I knew nothing about the petition, I wasn’t going to support it, I was supporting his right to present it. So I can’t remember now what went on in Tynwald but I do know the question of petitions at Tynwald Hill was sorted out.

**Mr Doyle:** So within your first year in the House of Keys you were in effect challenging the Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man? He decided not to have a petition and you thought it was important and right that a party should be entitled to present a petition. How was your relationship with the Governor after that incident?

**Mr Irving:** Fine. I have had a good relationship with six Governors, well the present one I hardly know, I think it is six. In fact I’ve been Clifford to six of them and I have been a bit difficult at times but tried not to embarrass them.

**Mr Doyle:** Next time, if we can, we will go on to the 1956 election if that’s all right?

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** We are up to the period 1956 to 1962 and I would like to cover the position in 1958 when there was a Commission on the Manx Constitution and it was you, Mr Irving, who moved the resolution but, before asking you questions on that, I think it is important just to record some newspaper comment at the time, at the risk of embarrassing you! But the comment was to the following effect and this was after you had moved the resolution for the Commission on the Constitution: ‘Mr Irving is a small, handsome man with fine features, silver hair, a perfectly cut suit. He is famous for his oratory. They say he can empty the houses at his election meetings.’ So it was in that -

**Mr Irving:** Where did you hear that piece?

**Mr Doyle:** That was a direct quote from one of the newspapers at the time.

**Mr Irving:** A local paper?

**Mr Doyle:** A local paper and it was just after you moved the resolution for a Commission on the Constitution. Can you give us some background on the resolution?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, there had been quite a lot of talk about the power of the Lieutenant-Governor at the time and the fact that the majority of the Legislative Council and the minority of the Keys could overrule the majority in the House of Keys and the power of the Council to not just delay legislation or proposed legislation, Bills carried by the Keys and one day the Speaker of the House of Keys, Sir Joseph Qualtrough, announced to the House that the Legislative Council had rejected two Bills which had been put forward by the House of Keys. I asked him, I am afraid knowing very well that they could, I said, ‘Is this right? Can the Legislative Council veto House of Keys’ legislation?’ and the Speaker said, ‘Yes, of course.’ So I said, ‘In that case I intend to propose the establishment of a commission to consider the powers of the Legislative Council.’ As time went on it became obvious that any commission would be a commission on the internal constitution so I went to Tynwald on the day when I had this proposal on the agenda and I got up to speak and a surprising number of members shouted ‘Agreed. Agreed.’ and I can remember one lovely man called George Taggart from South Douglas who said, ‘Let the Hon.. Member who has prepared his stuff put his case over’ and I thought that was great so I really didn’t have any trouble.

**Mr Doyle:** And you put the case over and I can’t resist another comment from the media, this was after the case was put forward. ‘Irving, a young man of courage and eloquence in his enthusiasm is to be admired.’ You had a good relationship with the media.

**Mr Irving:** I must have done! The things you are saying today about what the press have said... They weren't always so kind but they were always pretty fair to me, I believe.

**Mr Doyle:** And during the debate, just for the record, there appears to have been a little bit of a conflict between yourself and J B Bolton. Just another quote, 'Mr Irving said that Mr Bolton was becoming so politically cantankerous he was almost unbearable and that Bolton has a stagnant outlook.' Do you remember those comments in the conflict with Mr Bolton during the debate?

**Mr Irving:** No, I don't. I can remember making similar comments on other occasions because a lot of people felt that Mr Bolton, later Sir John Bolton and I think he deserved the knighthood, but Mr Bolton was against all the progressive elements in the Island and was mean, not with his own money, but with government fund money and there were various things said about him but I must say this, I think in the years he was in Tynwald in the House of Keys he gave great service to the Manx nation and from 1966-71 I was vice-chairman of the Finance Board of which he was chairman and Roy MacDonald from Peel was the other member, there were only three of us, and I don't think in those years, that would be getting on for five years I suppose, I don't know if we ever disagreed once on the Finance Board. So that a lot of the things that I have said about him at election time, I don't feel very strongly about them now and perhaps wish I hadn't said them but we finished up being real friends.

**Mr Doyle:** Excellent. And before we leave the Constitutional Committee, that was the MacDermott Committee, there was a letter from the Governor, Ambrose Dundas, on 15th October 1958 which said, 'Dear Clifford, Thanks for your letter seeking my advice. I think we had better have a talk about it. I am very much afraid that you would do more harm than good by moving your resolution.' That was the resolution of the constitutional reform. Do you remember any contact with the Governor on that?

**Mr Irving:** No, I don't. I don't recall that. I won't put a wicked interpretation on it.

**Mr Doyle:** No.

**Mr Irving:** The Whitehall view was we shouldn't do anything. No, no.

**Mr Doyle:** So were you happy that the commission had been set up with a fairly broad remit?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, indeed. Yes, I can remember that the Speaker of the House of Keys, Sir Joseph Qualtrough, said to me, 'I don't know about this commission. We've done all that in the past.' I understood that he felt that more important things had been done in the McDonnell Commission of 1911 but as soon as we had the commission it was a question of holding Sir Joseph back. He was a real leader of the reformers, I can tell you, even though his original attitude towards it wasn't that good. But the commission, they were pretty high powered people and they weren't local fellows with interests in votes in the Isle of Man, it wasn't as if they had any local interests. I remember one was the Lord Chief Justice from Northern Ireland and then there was somebody Armour who was a former Attorney-General in the United Kingdom, I think, and the one I liked was Mr Tutor Eade who had been Home Secretary and when I was giving evidence to the commission Tutor Eade said to me, in the public hearing, 'Tell me, Mr Irving, was your idea to get the old guard out?' and I said, 'Yes, sir, that is very well put, that was my idea' and so he said, 'I should be kind to the old guard if I were you, Mr Irving, because you will be one yourself before long.' Now that was fine. I thought that's pleasant for a moment. He asked me to see if he could see me the next day and we met and he said, 'I really want to apologise for speaking to you that way during the giving of evidence to the commission' and I thought how kind of him to bother to do that because it didn't matter to me at all but he was a very nice fellow, ah ha, I think!

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and in the middle of these important matters of constitution you weren't forgetting about Peel because I see reference in the newspapers to the 'Irving's annual gift of a Christmas tree to Peel.' Can you tell me something of that?

**Mr Irving:** Well, my brother was tree mad and soon after I got in the Keys, it was nothing to do with me,

he was made a member of the Forestry Board, that helped me a bit, that he was involved too in the legislation work, and he was a member of the Forestry Board and he said we ought to have a big Christmas tree in Peel and for several years we got this big tree, bought this big tree from the Forestry Board and I think paid for the cost of illuminating it. I don't know why it finished but eventually it stopped for some reason.

**Mr Doyle:** And then there was the Best Kept Village -

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, my brother thought there ought to be a competition for the best kept village and we had a nice big sign prepared - I have seen it from time to time in various places years ago. Someone told me a couple of years ago it's still going, I don't know whether they still have that competition but my brother and I were both, particularly he was, very interested in the countryside in terms of tourists and the beauty of the countryside and the protection of that beauty and in fact enhancing it with amenity planting and he agitated for a very long time to get the Arboretum at St John's.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, because on the attractions side there is also reference to yourself and Mr Bolton talking about it, 'improving Castle Rushen, calling for more imagination. It is a national showpiece. You are not proposing a display of dummy figures that would reduce it to a peep show' but you... That was the quote.

**Mr Irving:** He said that or I did?

**Mr Doyle:** It is actually from you in... The newspaper credit this to you. They may have been wrong but that was a quote from the newspaper at the time that... Did you have ideas for Castle Rushen in the 50s, for improving it, for displaying it?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I can remember once going to Tynwald for the dignified development of Castle Rushen, Peel Castle and Tynwald Day and I remember a gentleman in the Legislative Council getting up and saying 'You can forget about Tynwald Day, that's finished. The old fair is finished now.' I resisted getting up again and telling him that that day his son, as a member of the Round Table, was constructing masses of stands out there to keep the fair going and it did keep going but I think some people rightly felt in Tynwald that 'Don't let him have anything', meaning me, 'Don't let Irving have anything to do with it, he will make it like some Blackpool show if you are not careful.!

**Mr Doyle:** And there is also reference to debates on gambling and betting and a wonderful quote from Mr Clifford Irving, 'The fear of the Methodist vote hangs over the heads of politicians in the Isle of Man like an H-bomb.' Do you remember that?

**Mr Irving:** I remember it was said by me. I don't remember the occasion. Perhaps I ought not to have said that. The Speaker of the House of Keys, the same Sir Joseph Qualtrough, took a poor view of it and did in public in the Keys say that it would have been better if I hadn't said it and it might offend a religious denomination, so I apologised and said I certainly didn't want to but people privately were talking about it. If anything did not go through, not necessarily rightly, it could have been wrongly, people were saying, 'Oh, it must be the Methodist vote that has killed that.', especially if it was the age-old question in the Isle of Man of the pubs opening on Sunday.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and the Methodist vote was very influential?

**Mr Irving:** Well, people said it was. I don't know of course.

**Mr Doyle:** There are two other areas if we could just touch upon them generally. The first point was the visiting Industry Commission, the Tourist Commission, and then the question of redistribution. Do you want to say anything in general terms at this stage on those two .....

**Mr Irving:** Well, in general terms redistribution one might say... Start again, sir. There is great interest in the question of redistribution of seats in the House of Keys. It was obvious, I think, to everybody that it was time there was either new constituencies formed or at least something was done to ensure fair representation for people. You see, for example, the

four towns of the Island had eight members in Tynwald, that is Douglas, Ramsey, Castletown and Peel, had eight members and the population was 23,750 in those four towns, with eight members. Now the six sheadings, if we take them separately, with a population of 19,346 had 16 members in the House of Keys and it has been worked out that in 1955, for example, 12 members represented 13,000 electors and the other 12 represented 28,000 electors and what I always remember, too, was that Ramsey had one member in the House of Keys and they had 900 more voters than the constituency of Ayre, but Ayre had three members in the House of Keys and of course later this was all attended to. But with the decline of tourism and certain... or a great deal of talk of Bills of interest and of benefit, claimed of benefit to the tourist industry were defeated by the country members in the House of Keys. That probably could have been said about Sunday opening and a few things like that and there was a feeling that it was a period of town versus country and this affected everything almost in the Manx legislature for a long period. I remember a former Chaplain of the House of Keys saying at the funeral of a member, 'He entered Manx politics at the time when everything was overshadowed by the great battle between the boarding house keepers and the farmer.'

**Mr Doyle:** That was Rex Kissack at Norman Crowe's funeral.

**Mr Irving:** How do you know that? Did I tell you? I thought I told you, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** But he is a former Chaplain now, he has retired.

**Mr Doyle:** That was the country versus the town.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, country against the town, and this when either the Keys or Tynwald, those who wished to see them go through tended to blame either the town or the country for the fact that they didn't and I must say that a Mr Bolton, whom we have mentioned, my old friend J B Bolton, he was given leave in '55 to produce a Bill for redistribution of seats and he did and it failed first time but eventually, of course, in spite of the fact. It is very difficult for members who've already got an advantage for their own constituents to throw it away and say 'I agreed that we should have only one seat instead of two.' It is a lot to ask a member to do that but eventually that is the way it turned out and there was redistribution of seats.

**Mr Doyle:** And how was it decided how the seats be redistributed?

**Mr Irving:** I don't know. We -

**Mr Doyle:** The Boundaries Commission, for example, or was it sorted out in another way?

**Mr Irving:** No, of the five members in Douglas there were three for the constituency of North Douglas which is a very big constituency and two for South Douglas. We met and split the town of Douglas into four constituencies. Now I am not suggesting that we did anything naughty in doing this but it strikes me that it is a very bad thing that it was allowed to happen. In the United Kingdom there would be I think it is called a Speaker's Boundary Commission who would deal with this matter.

**Mr Doyle:** Independently.

**Mr Irving:** Not the five people who wanted seats there by saying, well, shall we make South Douglas here and North Douglas and West Douglas there, but anyway that is the way it happened and I remember being there and I haven't seen any change. There may have been minor changes in recent years but it did go through in that form.

**Mr Doyle:** So you sat round a table with a map in front of you or how was it actually decided upon?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, we sat round the table with a map in front of us.

**Mr Doyle:** That is as far as I am going to get, I think.

**Mr Irving:** Well, I don't know. (Laughs) I am not saying.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you have in your mind or did other people have in their mind which voters were resident in which constituency?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I think that's taken into consideration but not too blatantly, of course.

**Mr Doyle:** So they were redistributed -

**Mr Irving:** You put me in a very difficult position -

**Mr Doyle:** I apologise for that.

**Mr Irving:** I wouldn't like to suggest that any of these fellows, including myself, cheated.

**Mr Doyle:** No, I am not suggesting anything improper took place.

**Mr Irving:** No, I am sure you wouldn't but even if we had I wouldn't tell you.

**Mr Doyle:** But if it was convenient to exclude some of the Labour voters then perhaps the pen was put in a particular place on the map but that is speculation.

**Mr Irving:** It could have been, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** But they were redistributed in any event and everyone was happy with that.

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Can we turn now to the Visiting Industry Commission and say a few words about that?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was good that we got the commission of course. In fact we had a lot of good people on that, too. I remember someone, the Director General of the English Tourist Board, a Mr Lickish, and there were some others who were really interested and experienced people and they produced what we, in the action group, thought was an excellent report because it tied in so nicely with what we had put forward in our plan which we called Operation Progress. So we were delighted with that and all we hoped at the time was that the suggestions, the proposals had been made by the commission and we wanted to see people go ahead and produce results. So it was accepted by Tynwald and of course certain members said we don't agree with a casino, we don't agree with Sunday opening. One would expect them to, they were people who were very much opposed to that sort of thing, but I think all the proposals went through Tynwald and then it was put to Tynwald that the Tourist Board be asked to implement these things. Now before that I had indicated that I wanted to produce a Private Member's Bill which would change the Tourist Board, change their terms of reference particularly. Their terms of reference then were to publicise holidays in the Isle of Man, I think that is the broadest way I can put it, and I thought they ought to be doing more for tourism in the Isle of Man than merely telling people what a good place it was for a holiday. When I came to put my Bill forward, which I did in the Keys, it was turned down. I lost it and the reason I lost it was we had already told the Tourist Board to implement the commission report and the commission report proposed exactly what I was going to do, you see. But I was pleased that, after getting a bit of a hammering from some people at the time that we were going to change the job of the Tourist Board.

**Mr Doyle:** Because tourism, as now but even more in those days, is a very important matter. Can I just go back to the 2nd November 1956 and the election in West Douglas, just very briefly for the record, and it was the independent candidate who stands for enterprise and progress, that was on your manifesto and you were talking about the expansion of the tourist trade, cost of living, unemployment, government expenditure and Sunday opening and there was a bit of a battle, in all fairness, between yourself and Mr Bolton.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, of course, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And just for the record I will ask you a question in a moment, but just for the record, the votes were as follows: Irving, 2,588; Bolton, 1,544; and Quine, 1,272. What are your recollections of the battle with Mr Bolton, or J B I think you refer to him as?

**Mr Irving:** The number of people in Athol Street, when the count took place, when the result was announced from the balcony of the Police Station there, the noise and the number of people was terrific and we came out on the balcony and I didn't like it, a lot of people booed my friend Mr Bolton - I don't go in for that sort of thing - and I said my bit and then when J B started to speak the row started again and I was quite upset about this and I told J B, too, I said, 'I am awfully sorry this has happened' I moved over towards him and that sort of thing and tried to show that we had both been elected and we were going to stand together. Some of Mr Quine's friends were helping me instead of Mr Bolton and I felt a bit badly afterwards that their candidate missed out but anyway once the election was over, though we quarrelled now and again in Tynwald or the Keys, I didn't carry on saying rude things! Oh yes, you have reminded me, I did! Well, not too much.

**Mr Doyle:** Just political infighting.

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there any other issues of the day in the 50s and the early 60s?

**Mr Irving:** I haven't gone through all those, no.

**Mr Doyle:** That's okay. Can I just turn to January 1959 when it was recorded that Mr Irving, speaking out against the onerous boarding houses registration regulations in a Tynwald debate, you said as follows: 'If they are passed I will resign' and there was a burst of applause in Tynwald and the Governor threatened to clear the crowded public gallery and the media all referred to it as a 'fighting, strong speech.' Do you remember the boarding houses registration regulations? What was involved? Or is it the battle again between town and country... or what was involved?

**Mr Irving:** No, I don't remember them. It is probably because I don't want to remember them and I may have been a bit naughty in connection with those. I overplayed it a bit. I do remember being in Tynwald and getting great applause from the packed public gallery, as you have just mentioned. I was not opposed to registration and grading, providing first of all it was introduced as a voluntary measure and I think with a lot of things like weren't going to do much more by starting off voluntary and then it would be compulsory at the end, but before the end, as it were, it might be that people found it was... or appreciated that it helped them in that way. I was most anxious, having heard from so many people what a splendid place somewhere was where they'd stayed, the food was marvellous and the family were so nice to us, the service was great and yet I knew that place looked a mess outside and obviously inside, too, needed some refurbishment. And then you have got people the other way round who go to a place that we knew was pretty smart but then they would complain about the food and I wanted to ensure that everything was taken into consideration because you so often hear, oh, such and such a boarding house, doesn't it look splendid. It's really a wonderful place because it has been painted up and lots of flowers around it and so on. I may have gone too far with that in saying... I certainly did, probably one of the most stupid things I ever said was that I would resign. What on earth would I do then! (Laughter)

**Mr Doyle:** But you were getting a lot of support from the boarding house keepers presumably at that stage?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I was getting a lot of their support and people could say - there might be some truth in it - that they were my constituents and I was looking after them. I have always tried to believe that I am there in connection with the government of the Isle of Man and not the government of Douglas or my own constituency and I have followed English political writers on the subject, Burke and so on, believing that that's quite true, that that is the attitude that members ought to take. In this case I may have slipped up a bit and been influenced by the fact that they were my electors and a best example was - I have never said things just to please the electors - and that best example that I was going to say, was my opposition to the birch and -

**Mr Doyle:** The birch, yes, I will come to that. Can I turn now to 17th June 1959 which was an important day because in the 50s, as I understand it, tourism was the big thing on the Isle of Man, that there wasn't a finance sector as such or as we know there is today, bringing over 36 per cent of the national income today, but you put a resolution, or a motion, forward to abolish surtax and you suggested that you would encourage wealthy people to come and live here and set up business and the Attorney-General indicated it was worth investigating and there was reference to a rather large sprat to catch a mackerel. Do you remember the background to your thinking on the surtax? Can you give us some information on that?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I will bring in something else at the same time, if I may?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** I was very interested in abolishing surtax. It fits in a way with my other objective of many years and that was to cap income tax payments and I did even propose in the House of Keys once that if a person sent an income tax cheque of £10,000, no questions would be asked, that was the top, so a very wealthy person could come here and if he sent a substantial cheque, and we would have to decide on the range and that sort of thing, there would be no question of where is the money invested and prove that you have had this and prove that you have had that. If you pay the top that's it. That was the other thing but the better one I believed was surtax and I spoke to a couple of friends about it and they encouraged me with this surtax and I mentioned it in Tynwald, as you have said. At that time there was a body called the Income Tax Commission as opposed to Tax Commissioners, the Income Tax Commission which was set up to advise the Lieutenant-Governor on taxation. Well, just after my remarks in Tynwald, unfortunately, a member of the Income Tax Commission died and I know that because of my remark on abolition of surtax I was put on in place of this member who died. The Governor of the day made it quite clear to me that that was the reason I was got on. I went to the first meeting - I am going into a little bit of detail here - and the chairman was a Mr J B Bolton! There were, I suppose, five other members would it be or four other members and J B started the meeting and said, 'Well, Clifford, I want to welcome you to the commission and we hope you enjoy the work.' I said, 'Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I beg to move the abolition of surtax' and he said, 'Oh no, we have got an agenda here. You can't come here and move the abolition of surtax just like that.' He said, 'Mind you, I would agree' I think he said, 'to increasing it from a £2,500 figure before you pay to £4,000.' And I said, 'No, sir, that is no good to me. I don't want half a column in the newspaper explaining when it applies and when it doesn't. I just want two big words, 'No surtax'. So this went on. One said, 'I can't vote for it because I am Labour' and another said, 'I can't vote for it because I pay it.' So I said, 'Well then how can you be on an Income Tax Commission if you pay income tax?' you see and that sort of thing. This went on and I said, 'Well, I am sorry we haven't got anywhere.' and J B said, 'Oh yes we have, we have given it a good airing.' I said we've given it a good enough airing that I am going to move it at the next sitting of Tynwald that surtax be abolished. I said 'On the other hand I would prefer it if the chairman of the commission did it with the support of the commission. Two minutes later it was decided the chairman would go to Tynwald and propose the abolition of surtax. I think it went through the Governor first and I can remember the only difference I had with him, when it came to Tynwald, J B wanted it cut off right away and I said, 'No, I want this to apply not now but next April. I want people to have notice of it coming off because I don't want to lose today with people saying, oh this is to let off a lot of people in the Isle of Man who are paying surtax. It mustn't come in until people have had time to ..... and benefit from it' and so on and it went through that way. They accepted... I think it was my amendment was deferred and I always felt that's probably the best thing I ever did in Tynwald in effect. Yes, I think it made a heck of a lot of difference.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, there are a lot of people who would say that that was the start of the finance sector.

**Mr Irving:** Really. It gave us a lot of publicity as a low tax area. I am not saying tax haven, as a low tax area and my friend J B Bolton was very pleased that we hadn't wasted the morning.

**Mr Doyle:** Can I turn now to your relationship with the Governors, in particular Ronald Garvey. We have spoken previously about your relationship with the Governors, how it was a good

relationship. On 6th July 1961 there is a letter from Mr Garvey: 'My dear Irvings, Thanks for the birthday gift. I have never had the luxury of an aftershave lotion before.' Do you remember sending the Governor aftershave lotion?

**Mr Irving:** We are going down to what Sir Joseph Qualtrough, the Speaker, would say, 'We are getting down to the small potatoes now.'

**Mr Doyle:** I thought it was a nice touch.

**Mr Irving:** Well, yes. He was a great fellow, a real promoter. Governor Garvey would have a go at anything and he did quite a lot, he encouraged us to have our own currency here and he was determined to play his part in establishing a national identity for the Isle of Man in so many ways and do anything to get publicity for the Island.

**Mr Doyle:** He helped at the trade exhibitions?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, we had these trade exhibitions and the Governor was very keen to help there and he would enter into anything that he thought was promoting the welfare of the people of the Island. Everybody liked him. He was a great sport. He would laugh and joke about things but some proceeding him, the gentleman proceeding him was quite different, all right, I got on well with him and people seemed to like him but Garvey was a real breath of fresh air on the Island.

**Mr Doyle:** Would you see a lot of him?

**Mr Irving:** Well, yes, he and I... He used to do a bit on the BBC, particularly BBC North radio, and we were trying to outdo each other on getting stuff on BBC radio and he spoke, he was an authority on Captain Bligh because he had been Governor of Pitcairn, and Fiji I think.

**Mr Doyle:** Is that where he offered to get the mermen from?

**Mr Irving:** Oh good heavens, that was the time of my offer of £20,000 for a mermaid. Well of course he wasn't going to be outdone by me and he announced that he had seen a merman. You see what a sense of fun the man had, yes, that he had seen a merman and he wrote to his friend, the Governor of Fiji, asking if the Governor of Fiji would send some mermaids here to mate with what he believed were mermen in Manx waters and the Governor of Fiji wrote back and said he would gladly send some of their mermaids but it would offend the White Slave Traffic Act!

**Mr Doyle:** So you had some good times with Sir Ronald Garvey.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, but you see he said, I told you, didn't I, he would never do any more for the BBC because they cut the best bits out of his speech, on tape, and one was, he said, 'Oh course Bligh went back and got breadfruit and planted one in the grounds of Government House in Fiji', shall we say, and he said, 'You know, just as they do in the English county houses, I, together with my male guests, used to go out and we would all piddle around the breadfruit tree' and they cut it out. He said, 'I will never do anything for them again!'

**Mr Doyle:** Excellent.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, the Governor, and this letter, you've seen it from Fiji, well I sent it to this man in the Daily Mirror. Well, you've seen the bit in the Mirror, I suppose, haven't you. Right, sir.

**Mr Doyle:** It is 18th November 1996 and in this session we are going to endeavour to cover the period from 1962 to 1971, but before we cover that period there is just a couple of matters that we should sweep up. In 1958, Mr Irving, an important year there because the UK Treasury controls over the Island's finances were abolished. Is that correct?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, they were. There had been a lot of discussions with the United Kingdom Government about it and in 1958 we got several Bills through which confirmed the deal, as it were, that in future the Treasury would let us get on with it.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there any discussions with UK officials on -

**Mr Irving:** Beforehand? Oh yes, indeed. It wasn't something the constitutional reform boys had produced, it had been going on and Mr J B Bolton was in the forefront here and did a very good job in arranging this with the Treasury and it is surprising that when we talk about our thousand years of home rule, it is nine hundred and something years of course before we got control of our finances. At least in theory.

**Mr Doyle:** So if we could go now to 1961 and the drop in population in that year. That was a matter of concern, wasn't it?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, great concern. The census in 1961 showed that our population had dropped to 48,150 and over ten years of course it is, I should think, about up to 10,000 difference. It was an enormous difference. Maybe 10,000 is pitching it a bit high but you see I think that the worst thing that can happen to an island community is to see its population fading away. It is an extremely bad sign.

**Mr Doyle:** And was it 1961 that was the first Viking festival in Peel?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I think it was '61 - you see I am so old now that a year's neither here nor there to me - '61 or '62 and I think it was the beginning of establishing Peel as an historical Viking centre and I can remember the festival. The thing that surprised everybody was they weren't young boys who took part, they were grown men and so many of them grew beards. The number of fellows who grew beards in Peel for the festival was fantastic and it was a great success. It went on for quite a few years but in the end I am afraid young boys took over and it wasn't quite the same when they light a cigarette when they hit the beach or look at their wrist watches to see what the time is! No, no, I am perhaps being a bit unkind to them there but it never was quite so well organised when younger chaps took over.

**Mr Doyle:** No, and was this brought in when you were a member of the Tourist Board?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I remember the Tourist Board at the time and I had been reading about a festival in Lerwick in the Shetland Islands. I had been in the Shetlands for a year during the war and this festival, though it wasn't carried out during the wars, a thousand torches I think they had last year, people with great big torches going through the street with a boat they set on fire in the Market Square. Anyway it gave me the idea because they dressed up very well and the uniforms, if you like to call them that, or the Viking dress, whatever they wear, and the helmets and swords and so, they were handed down from generation to generation in the Shetlands and it was a very fine effort. So we thought we would try it in Peel.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you participate in the first festival?

**Mr Irving:** No, I didn't but Bill Quayle, a member of Tynwald, and Charlie Kerruish and I, at some big meeting, we had the cheek to dress up in some of this Viking gear. No, we didn't participate but I remember going to Peel with Charles Kerruish and holding a public meeting to get to the people and they were very good.

**Mr Doyle:** Was there a meeting with Albert Hill?

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Albert Hill, yes. Albert asked me, he said, 'Now Mr Irving it is all very well telling us all this but where do we get the boats from to do the landing?' and I said, well, we didn't want really to be bothered with details, we had come there to give them the overall picture but I am quite sure there are lots of places you can get boats. That was Albert, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** You used the phrase before, the promotion of Peel as an historical Viking centre. You will see what is referred to as the Heritage Centre in 1996 under construction, almost finishing, was that part of your vision to have a centre?

**Mr Irving:** No, no. Even to have the Viking longhouse there was something for us and it all helped to promote Peel in terms of Vikings.

**Mr Doyle:** If we turn now to the legislative developments in 1961, the Isle of Man Constitution Bill was around, I think you said you took that?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, in 1961 we had had the result of the deliberations of the MacDermott Commission, these high-powered gentlemen who came from the United Kingdom to look at the constitutional arrangement. We had had their view.

**Mr Doyle:** In 1961, the Isle of Man Constitution Bill going before Tynwald.

**Mr Irving:** Yes. So when Tynwald had agreed to accept all these recommendations, I had the great pleasure of handling the Bill in the House of Keys and in the end I think it was unanimous but some people had some slight reservations about certain matters but it went through and this was the end of our major constitutional reform work, though very soon we were going to start on the position of the Lieutenant-Governor and various officials.

**Mr Doyle:** And just for the record, we have covered it already but 1961 was the year of the mermaid competition?

**Mr Irving:** Ha-ha, yes! That was the year of the mermaids and no one caught one!

**Mr Doyle:** No, that was a great disappointment.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, very disappointing. These Peel people promised me you could see them if you went behind the castle on the rocks there and they always had red hair but they didn't appear.

**Mr Doyle:** Nothing there. And also the surtax was abolished, from April -

**Mr Irving:** From April 1961 which I hope was a good move.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, a lot of commentators say that that was the start or setting the scene of the development of the finance sector.

**Mr Irving:** Setting the scene, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Are you happy with the position of the finance sector in 1996, over 35 per cent of the Island's income?

**Mr Irving:** I am very happy and I have supported the growth of the finance sector all the way along. I am very disappointed that many Manx people, through Mec Vannin, have opposed it in the past but I think they realise now they would be in a bad way without it. I have only one reservation and that is I have seen tourism so important in the Island and so many of our eggs in the tourism basket and one notes what's happened there and it makes us all the more anxious to keep our finance sector and be grateful that we have got it but at the same time trying to diversify as much as possible in industrial development here, light engineering and manufacturing and so on and in any other way because I think it is a pity if we have to go on for ever being completely dependent on one particular sector in the economy. But what we would do without it I hate to think.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, do you think it's changed for the better or for the worse, the quality of life that Manx people enjoy on the Island?

**Mr Irving:** Oh I do, indeed, yes. Life has changed on the Island and it's surprising that we have got a lot of people in the finance sector who have come from the United Kingdom and I must say it is very obvious that in many aspects of living in the Island these people have come and have set the pace and introduced many new ideas to the Island which we are very glad to have. And I must say too, a lot of the people who have come in the finance sector and people who have come as new residents are particularly good at supporting the retention of the quality of life here. In fact, many of them are more Manx than the people who were born here. So that is very good.

**Mr Doyle:** If we go to 1962, there was a general election -

**Mr Irving:** Sixty two?

**Mr Doyle:** Well, you didn't stand as a candidate, I think. What was the reasoning behind that?

**Mr Irving:** No, well, you see, when I entered Tynwald, pretty soon after I became a member in 1955, I was put on three boards of Tynwald and these three boards of Tynwald and various committees and the regular meetings of the House of Keys and Tynwald, they in themselves don't take the majority of the time but these boards and committees do and it becomes... and it certainly is now, and then it was becoming a full time job. Now one still has to earn ones living and the pay which was known as expenses of course - it was always called expenses, never salary or pay - when I joined was £150 a year. By 1962 it had gone up to £200 a year. Well I just couldn't afford because I would have had to employ someone, which I wouldn't get at £200 a year, to help my brother in my absence at all these meetings and things and I decided that, though I still had as much enthusiasm, probably more for politics, it was just impossible and of course it was impossible for most people in the Island because when I joined the Keys I was surprised how old members were. I was a very young fellow of 41 and it struck me they were either retired or certainly not involved in full time employment. So I was a little sad about it but I didn't stand in 1962. So my knowledge of what happened between 1962 and 1966, when I stood again and was elected, is not very good.

**Mr Doyle:** The 1966 election, you were in East Douglas on that occasion.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I had had my first move. No, I was North first and then I was -

**Mr Doyle:** West and then East. Why did you move to East Douglas? Do you remember the reasoning behind that?

**Mr Irving:** I think I moved to East because I was crazy about the development of tourism and I was so interested in that and East seemed to be the tourist area of the Isle of Man and I suppose that is why I did it.

**Mr Doyle:** Did the shipping strike in the summer of 1966, did that have an impact on the tourists?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, that was pretty awful and I remember being a member of a committee dealing with the end of the season and what were we going to do, especially to get more tourists in, say, September and so on, and we proposed, and it was agreed, that every person who came here, every visitor who came with his golf clubs could have free golf at the golf courses of the Island with the exception of Castletown, I think, and so people could bring their clubs and they could play for free. The bill for this free golf for everybody who took advantage of it was £1,500, so it was a comparatively cheap promotion. We also decided that the government would plant a tree for everybody who came to the Island in September on holiday, with their name on it. They were going to plant the trees anyway but it meant we had to buy some little metal tags and I remember doing this sort of thing and we did quite well but it was a poor season in view of the strike. But you see it was a shipping strike, it wasn't, as we had some years later, a lorry strike, your lorry drivers' strike in the UK. It meant that not just tourism but industry and every damned thing was affected by a sea strike.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you remember the reasons for the strike?

**MR Irving:** No, I don't but I remember afterwards efforts were made by government to get the TUC and various people to say that if the Manx Government agreed to the terms achieved in the United Kingdom or would they exclude the Isle of Man. I don't think that certainly worked a hundred per cent anyway. They would be very chary about that.

**Mr Doyle:** Well what other important developments were taking place -

**Mr Irving:** Well, they weren't very important things. We got the okay from the United Kingdom Government to have our own passports. You see, more of the national identity stuff and I remember, too, the 1966 budget was presented by the Governor and it seems odd to think that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Isle of Man was the Governor, though we did by 1966, though we did not have in 1961, we did have a Finance Board. I remember once the Governor produced a budget, I don't remember if it was this particular year, and he proposed a reduction on the beer duty for high specific gravity beers produced in the Isle

of Man and this was put to the Keys. The Keys didn't think much of that and a Mr G P Quine, a member for Douglas, said, 'What we want is 5 pence off a gallon of petrol. So much for the Governor's proposal, it turned out to be 5 pence off the petrol.

**Mr Doyle:** So the Governor in the 60s there was playing a role of the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. It is a very strong position for all sorts of things, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** I am jumping years now but in your years as Chairman of Executive Council, I think people were equating that with the role of a Prime Minister.

**Mr Irving:** But it wasn't, of course. No.

**Mr Doyle:** No. Do you remember the incident with Sir Charles Forte when he put that to you?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, when I met him in London and he said he was having a little luncheon party and he was asking Ted Heath, as Prime Minister, so that would date it, wouldn't it? And he said, 'Since you are Prime Minister in the Isle of Man I want you to come too.' So he said, 'There are only going to be six or eight of us' something like that. I wasn't able to go and I did assure him that I certainly wasn't Prime Minister and some people say now, when they talk in terms of Chief Minister, Chief Minister nowadays has enormous responsibilities, Chairman of the Executive Council technically had only one and that was to advise the Lieutenant-Governor. So I managed to get the Governor out of Executive Council which was a great help. Well, not a great help, a nice little move forward.

**Mr Doyle:** So it is not just your modesty when you're describing the role of the Chairman of Executive Council as advisory? That was what happened in practice as well. If the Governor wanted to do something he would do it -

**Mr Irving:** I would stop him technically, not practically! So some things did happen but then one finds in life that many, many times no one ever questions your authority. If you just say we are going to do so and so, they assume that you have the right to do it. So that in practice it is a bit more than technically advising the Governor.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and then in 1967, again there was some concern over the balance of the population. What was it there? What was the concern .....

**Mr Irving:** There was great concern and I suppose it was promoted by the press to a certain extent, too, probably quite rightly, the number of old people. We were an old persons' Island. I always remember that in the UK it was said at the time for every pensioner there, there were five workers, whereas in the Isle of Man for every pensioner there were only three people working and we had this imbalance, we believed, in having so many old people and we were determined to find inducements for young people to come and live here. We have, I think, or at least the Island has succeeded in correcting this imbalance of population in various ways, the finance sector even, but particularly in light industry. I think I have been in the Department of Industry for many, many years and I think that however much we favour the finance sector there are going to be an awful lot of young people in the Island who would not fit into that sort of occupation and therefore we must promote these industrial things here.

**Mr Doyle:** Was there concern in the late 60s from Mec Vannin at all? Was that happening in those years?

**Mr Irving:** About what? About the finance sector?

**Mr Doyle:** About national identity and people from across coming over and using the Island as a finance centre?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, we talked a month ago about surtax and whenever you talk about new residents you get people saying, you know, we don't want all these new residents, we are not going to be a Manx place anymore, and so on. I've found enormous numbers, I have already said, of new residents who are very good in trying to preserve not just the quality of life but the type of life, the traditions of the Isle of Man, and so on but then you get the ultra-nationalist, Nationalist with a capital N if you like, and I believe they go too far.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you know any of the individuals involved in the Mec Vannin movement?

**Mr Irving:** I was a member of Mec Vannin myself.

**Mr Doyle:** When would that have been?

**Mr Irving:** Well, that was years ago and it wasn't anything like the Mec Vannin you think of nowadays but everybody was joining and saying, oh yes, I'm Manx, I'll give you ten bob or whatever it was but then these things get political, don't they? Like the old action group did, yes, they get political and it breaks up a bit then but you see Mec Vannin wanted to develop agriculture and fisheries but now it is very difficult indeed to, in view of the size of the Island, and the fishing opportunities in what could be regarded by anybody as Manx waters, it is an extremely difficult thing to do.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you remember the leading personalities within Mec Vannin? Who were the leading personalities?

**Mr Irving:** It started with three men who met on the Isle of Man boat regularly, they commuted. They lived here and worked in Liverpool, I think. One I know lived out in Sulby Glen, another in Ramsey. I forget their names now. There were three of them and they decided they were going to form - I don't know if they were necessarily Manx - a Manx organisation, Mec Vannin.

**Mr Doyle:** Okay and then in 1967, where we are at the moment, in February there was the vote of no confidence, the Kerruish matter -

**Mr Irving:** Oh, the Kerruish matter you call it! Charlie's matter, yes. What happened was that the Governor, though the Keys had told him they did not want their Speaker to be a member of the Executive Council, especially with the word 'executive', had it been 'advisory' it might have been a bit better, anyway they didn't want the Speaker involved and the Governor appointed the Speaker of the day as a member of the Executive Council and 14 of us in the Keys decided that we didn't think this was on. Not that we had any objection to the way in which the Speaker carried out his responsibilities to the House of Keys, we had no criticism of the way he did his work, his behaviour, or anything - and this is hard to put over at times because they think you're really having a go at the Speaker but we weren't - it was merely a question that we wanted the Speaker to appear neutral.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you speak with Mr Kerruish before the motion was put, do you remember?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did he understand?

**Mr Irving:** Understand, he said, 'Well you know the only thing you can do?' I said, 'What's that?' He said, 'Move a vote of no confidence.'

**Mr Doyle:** So he suggested it?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, he did, yes. I have reminded him a couple of times when things come up in conversation. Yes, that's all right. But there was no question of having no confidence in the way he carried out his duties as Speaker, it was merely we wanted him to appear impartial and I didn't know if I would get a majority because some fellows were, 'Oh no, we don't want to upset this person, and Mr So and so says we shouldn't do it.' The establishment were working on some of the members, you know, you can't treat the Speaker like this, so when I got up to move this vote of no confidence I thought there is one thing I have got to do and that is I have got to nail my colleagues to the wall straight away. So I said, 'I rise on behalf of Mr So and so, the Hon. Member for so and so and went through the 14 and there we are.

**Mr Doyle:** And they all voted in favour of the -

**Mr Irving:** The 14 voted in favour, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you speak with Mr Kerruish after the debate about the matters that were raised?

**Mr Irving:** Well, we were quite friendly afterwards and always have been of course, yes, and then he and I

**Mr Doyle:** But you were politicians?

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Well, yes, we kept friendship and politics in separate compartments. Yes. Oh, he's had a go at me.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you find that most of the members, just speaking generally, would keep politics and friendship in different compartments?

**Mr Irving:** No, certainly not nowadays anyway. When I first went in I thought members did more than they do now and I went in and of course the first thing I proposed, when I did propose something, I found a lot of fellows voted against me. I thought, they are the bad lot in here, you see, they are the rotten so and sos that don't support this good thing and then the next time I find that they are my supporters and my previous supporters on the other side, so you learn, you know, that just because they vote against you they are not trying to do you down all the time.

**Mr Doyle:** In '67 there was the Radio Caroline matter as well.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, we had the Marine Franchise Bill which didn't make it an offence for Radio Caroline to moor off Ramsey to broadcast but it was an offence for anyone to supply them or assist them in any way. I think that is about right. As you're a legal gentleman, did you think that is about right? Anyway... and it looked as if the Bill was going through and then, I was in a bad mood frankly, it was naughty of me and I made a big thing about it and in the end the fellow who was handling the Bill, Roy MacDonald who was Member for Peel, Roy had to vote for it but he said, 'I don't like it but I'm handling it and so I've got to vote for it.' And Howard Simcocks told me before we went in the chamber, Howard said, 'It'll go through today, I'm sure. We don't like it but it'll go through today.' So that it didn't go through. I think it got three votes out of 24 and we thought this was marvellous and Mr Ronan O'Railly running these pirate ships came to me afterwards and said, 'Mr Irving that was a lovely thing you did this morning. I am now going out to Caroline and we are going to play the Manx national anthem ten times a day' and he did, but not a whole verse of course!

**Mr Doyle:** Excellent. But during the debate, is there any truth in the rumour that you tore the Bill up and threw it on the floor? Did that happen?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was silly of me but I did, yes, and I remember saying 'I've just been reading Mr Harold Wilson says angry dogs are entitled to one bite' and I said, 'I'm going to have a bite in his direction today' and so Howard Simcocks carried on and said, 'We are not lackeys for Mr Harold Wilson here.' (Laughs) So it was a good old debate we had and of course then we found it wasn't getting us anywhere and an order in the Council would apply to the Isle of Man, so we talked about going to the United Nations against the British ministers in the UK, or going to the Commonwealth, and then we petitioned the Queen and asked Her Majesty to protect us from her United Kingdom ministers. So we were summoned to the Privy Council meeting in Downing Street and in the Chair in the Council... oh, and it was Howard Simcocks leading the delegation because it was his idea to go to the Queen, you see - (Laughing) that is how you choose your leader - and Charles Kerruish was there and, who else? Oh I think Mr Kermeen, Eddie Kermeen, he was Clerk of Tynwald then and later he became a member of the Keys for West Douglas. So we went to the Council -

**Mr Doyle:** I think the Attorney-General would.....

**Mr Irving:** The Attorney-General was there, yes, I'm sorry. Yes, that's it.

**Mr Doyle:** And how were you received?

**Mr Irving:** Well, we were received very nicely of course. You have read the minutes, have you? You've

got them. I showed you the minutes, yes. Yes, everybody was very polite but before we started the business, as it were, I said to the Lord President who was - I forget his name now - anyway I said to the Lord President of the Council, 'I wish to protest that the ministers we're seeking Her Majesty's protection from are here today as our judges today.' And he passed it over and we got on with the business and Howard Simcocks who was very good and, as you know, he was blind and he had a list of God knows how many points he wanted to put over to them, asked me to sit next to him and put him right if he forgot any and he was very good and needed no prompting all the way through. He got them all out of order but it didn't matter, it was brilliant the way he remembered all these points and in the end we said we would torpedo... No, I said this when we had the Bill about Caroline, we would not think of torpedoing the ship Caroline unless we got more power for Manx Radio. So we spent a lot of time at the Privy Council talking about not how naughty they were in slapping an order in Council on the Isle of Man in this connection but rather power for Manx Radio and would they consult us about it and would we talk about it and so on and they just got rid of us frankly. They were very nice and polite and I thanked them for listening to us and so on and as I came out Sir Godfrey Agnew, Clerk of the Privy Council, said, 'Mr Irving, you mentioned that you are meeting the same ministers as you are seeking protection from, the Queen's protection.' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Well, the reason for that is Her Majesty must never receive conflicting advice' and so that was it. But it was, too, a morning when I wanted to buy a couple of small alligators so I went to a place in North London, Hendon Central -

**Mr Doyle:** Sorry, what were the alligators for? It will come as a surprise to some people. What were you buying the alligators for? Just to bring to the meeting?

**Mr Irving:** You mean, people don't usually buy alligators in the town?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, you have just taken me by surprise, Mr Irving.

**Mr Irving:** Oh, yes. No, I had a small aquarium, you see -

**Mr Doyle:** In Douglas?

**Mr Irving:** In Castle Street, yes. It really was going to be just my private little place to keep my fish and things in and then we decided we would charge a shilling each or two shillings each and people can come in and see the fish and I wanted a couple of alligators and I had them and I went to Hendon Central and I had to rush back to Downing Street. I hadn't time to get them to the hotel, leave them at the hotel, so I had to take them to the meeting at the Privy Council with me. The Clerk, who knew I had them of course, said, 'Don't tell the press outside, Mr Irving.'

**Mr Doyle:** You mean he could see the headlines in the morning ....

**Mr Irving:** So I never did. Yes, Manx delegation take alligators to Privy Council!

**Mr Doyle:** This is not another mermaid story. There were actually in a box?

**Mr Irving:** No, no. These really were, yes. I let them loose in the hotel dining room, I remember.

**Mr Doyle:** Because I have heard about the box of alligators but I never realised that they were live.

**Mr Irving:** Oh, live, yes! Oh, heck, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you go back on the boat or the plane?

**Mr Irving:** Back on the plane, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** With the alligators!

**Mr Irving:** They weren't very big. A four-year old would only be about 15 inches or so.

**Mr Doyle:** And so you put these in an aquarium down in Castle Street? Did you have lots of people

calling in, looking at these?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was good fun. I thought how nice to be able to have my hobby of keeping fish and people paying -

**Mr Doyle:** Was that beneath the shop, was it?

**Mr Irving:** It was an entrance in Castle Street and it was beneath some of the billiard saloon on the Loch Quay. There's a billiard place been there for years. They were formerly the offices of the Palace and Derby Council Company and it was a basement and a bit of ground floor.

**Mr Doyle:** This interest in water and things in water, you had the power boats as well.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, this is the period when I went for a few days to the Lake District to see Donald Campbell doing a speed attempt there and I met him in the hotel, I forget what it is called, Old England isn't it, in Windermere and said, 'I'll come and sweep the course for you' and he said, 'I can't afford to have anybody sweeping the course, I'm afraid' and I said, 'Ooh, I don't want any money. I am just doing it for the fun' and he said, 'Well, I'm going to Barrow to get a new propeller and so I'll give you a ring in a couple of days because I won't be doing anything for a few days and we can meet in Connister and have a go.' I waited a couple of days and I didn't hear from him and thought I had better get back to the Isle of Man and I bought a paper, the Telegraph, and I was looking at that and it showed a picture of Mr Donald Campbell and his boat which hit a pit prop in the lake, you see, and it didn't do him any harm. I liked any bit of fast boating, so I went to see a man in Lancashire who sold little hydroplanes. These were little ones you kneel in and I got a little hydroplane and brought it over and had a lot of fun with it and then some other fellows got hydroplanes but they had little, very high compression engines that were very hard to start and they needed pretty flat water for racing, so we moved into bigger boats and then we got the Daily Telegraph who were doing the round Britain race to bring everybody to the Isle of Man and let them stay here overnight and do a lap of the Island the next day and this interested the British Outboard Racing Club or something to come over here and we would continue the races and we got our own boats and though they are not very good and it's not a good thing for spectators because you just see them go past if you are going round the Island but it gave me a great deal of pleasure in having my own little racing boat and doing, in the evenings in the summer, a quick lap around the Island by myself. I could do about 50 miles an hour. I've been twice up to Scotland in it on a Sunday morning for a drink.

**Mr Doyle:** Were you harnessed in with a helmet?

**Mr Irving:** No, no. When we were racing you would have to wear a helmet. No, no. It wouldn't do much, 50 at the most.

**Mr Doyle:** Then in 1968 when you came over with the hydroplanes, was that -

**Mr Irving:** I don't know if it was '68. Sixty eight was our first round the Island Manx marathon race.

**Mr Doyle:** After, the middle to the late 60s.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, the middle to the late 60s.

**Mr Doyle:** But that would have been quite unique on the Island, wouldn't it?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. In fact I did get in touch with the Royal Yachting Association and say I understand that your charter allows to operate in the United Kingdom only and we are not the United Kingdom, would you regard the Manx National Powerboat Club as a national authority and they said certainly. So we were given a place for a world record in Geneva or Washington or wherever they were, a lap around the Island as a world record. The only place in the world where it wasn't time or distance or capacity of the boat. One lap round the Isle of Man could be a world record. I never had a boat fast enough. Sorry to go into so much detail.

**Mr Doyle:** No, it's interesting. So if I get back to 1968 and Manx Radio.

**Mr Irving:** Fifty thousand pounds, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** That's it, yes. What happened then?

**Mr Irving:** Well, we kept up the agitation for more power for Manx Radio but I can remember one politician at the time who said, 'I will never be happy until Manx Radio can be heard in the foothills of the Ural Mountains' which is a heck of a long way.

**Mr Doyle:** So the Government bought £50,000 worth....

**Mr Irving:** Yes, but I think the idea of having it as a big international commercial station didn't last a long time.

**Mr Doyle:** There was a bid a few years back now, wasn't it, from Mr Kreisky who is a... a privatisation attempt?

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** What did you think of all that?

**Mr Irving:** I didn't know. I wasn't involved in that, was I ill at the time? Yes, I must have been. It's not very long ago. I forget what was proposed and I didn't have all the information.

**Mr Doyle:** No, but the general principle as to whether the radio station should be owned by the government or in private hands. What are your views on that? We are digressing a bit here but it would be interesting to hear them.

**Mr Irving:** Well, I'm not qualified to have any views really because I don't know what the possibilities are, what it would cost, or anything about it. It hasn't been something that I've taken a great deal of interest in.

**Mr Doyle:** All right then. That's an honest response.

**Mr Irving:** So I am sorry I can't -

**Mr Doyle:** No, that's all right. And then we had the Usury Act.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, I was Vice-Chairman of the Finance Board and the Chairman was in the Legislative Council and we liked introducing Bills into the House of Keys in those days, not starting off in the upper house and I was asked to go to the Keys one day with some copies of a Bill, they were merely typed, they hadn't been printed, dealing with the Usury Act. We had found in the Finance Board that money was pouring off the Island, haemorrhaging was the word that was used. We were offering a maximum of 6 per cent interest when one could get 8 per cent anywhere at the time and it meant that the government just wasn't able to borrow money because they weren't prepared to pay the price for it. Now it isn't something that you can give notice of because everything stops once you say you are thinking of altering the interest rate, so I passed these bits of paper around in the Keys and said could I have the suspension of standing orders to take the first reading of this Bill, in fact, I said I wanted to take three readings, if I may, and I tried to explain why it was essential and why we couldn't wait and the Keys were very good, they agreed, so we got three readings through in the morning and the thing hadn't even been printed in the usual form and we had the Council standing by in the afternoon, the Legislative Council, and was it the next day or the same afternoon, we had a special meeting of Tynwald to sign it. So we may have got the Bill off to the UK for Royal Assent the same day but it was something we had to do. Unless you are prepared to offer the current rate of interest or an attractive rate of interest, no one is going to lend you any money.

**Mr Doyle:** No, and there were also developments in connection with limiting the Governor's powers, I think, or the Governor's position at that time?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, we were beginning in those days to look at not just the powers of the Legislative Council but the powers of the Lieutenant-Governor and one can see over the years, up until the

Governor ceased to be in the Chair in Tynwald or in the Chair in the Legislative Council, and, I think, almost every power and duty, responsibility, was taken from the Lieutenant-Governor except those cases where it was essential to show impartiality. We had to have some one doing it so people would understand we were being fair about the whole thing, and no axe to grind themselves, and not just putting forward political ideas.

**Mr Doyle:** Well, wasn't there some reference in the international media to a rebellion on the Island?

**Mr Irving:** Oh, yes. Well, the rebellion wasn't just the Governor. What happened was, I went to Executive Council one day and I noticed the Union Jack was flying so I said, 'Why is the Union Jack flying today? Was it special?' and someone said, 'It is the Duke of Gloucester's birthday.' So I thought now why are we particularly interested in the Duke of Gloucester and then the question arose, why do we fly the Union Jack on Manx Government Buildings? There was no question of disrespect for the Union Jack at all and eventually, after discussing the matter, we decided that the Manx flag would be flown on all government owned property when appropriate, when anybody wanted to fly a flag, except on the death of the United Kingdom Prime Minister or a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. I don't know what the rule is nowadays but that was the rule then in 1968 and the papers made a lot of it. In fact one paper someone sent me from Los Angeles said about they are rejecting the United Kingdom flag and rebellion in the Isle of Man and I was quoted in this paper as saying that it wasn't a rebellion - that would be to some UK paper, I suppose - it was merely an orderly, gentlemanly insurrection. I don't know why I thought of that but there was all this fuss about the flag and you've noticed, here again it is the old national identity and we stopped flying the Union Jack on the Tynwald all the time. I think at one time, did we have Manx flag, Union Jack, Manx flag, Union Jack?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** We don't now. I think they are Manx flags all round. Now the Chairman of the Government Property Trustees in those days was a Mr Roy MacDonald from Peel. Now Roy was a great fellow for a nice gentlemanly insurrection and he was very Manx and he was delighted to fly the Manx flag instead of the Union Jack.

**Mr Doyle:** Did the abolition of the property vote, the one man, one vote... Have you anything to say on that?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, well I introduced a Private Member's Bill to do this. It wasn't a government measure, or it wasn't on behalf of any department. I was particularly anxious to do it because around that time I'd already said at election time that I was in favour of one man, one vote. I had a motor car space in Douglas at Shaw's Brow for which I paid £30 a year and that gave me a vote in that particular ward, whatever it is, I forget which ward it is now. It gave me an extra vote. It gave me a property vote for the sake of £30 a year the car got a vote if you like -

**Mr Doyle:** So you could vote where you were resident?

**Mr Irving:** And the Daily Express got a hold of this and... I don't know how!

**Mr Doyle:** Mr Irving!

**Mr Irving:** I was interested in any publicity for the Island and they showed a picture of me with the car and said, 'What are the car's views on this' and I said, 'Well, the car doesn't believe in cars having votes and wants me to vote for everybody who is against it.' Anyway it spurred me on, this one man, one vote, and so I don't think I had a lot of trouble with it and that was that.

**Mr Doyle:** So just to clarify that, you could have a vote where you were resident and a vote where you owned property as well. So you could have two votes?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, well there is a trust on the Island, I won't name the trust but I think a lot of people would remember it, where the trustees all have a vote, I think, in nearly every area of the Isle of Man because it was such a very large body—they built a very large estate and some people

had an enormous number of votes, simply because they rented property, you see. Now I know people who rent, say, a shop if you like in Peel would claim, well, though I live in Douglas and I have a vote in Douglas I have an interest in Peel, you see, but I am afraid nowadays the conception is one man, one vote and that is it and I don't think we had a lot of trouble with that.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there no adverse comments from other people on the Island about it?

**Mr Irving:** One very well known gentleman in the Isle of Man, I'd better not mention his name.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, why not? For the record.

**Mr Irving:** Oh, no, he was a nice old boy. The Reverend Fred Cubbon stopped me in Strand Street one day and he said, 'You're a communist' and I said, 'Why?' and he said, 'This matter of getting rid of the property vote' and I said, 'Yes, I am a good communist like Winston Churchill who says Conservative policy is one man, one vote' and he said, 'Well, I'll tell you, Clifford, if you get this through I won't use my property vote here for you.' I thought well, am I wrong or is he wrong? If there isn't a property vote I don't care what he does.

**Mr Doyle:** Use the other vote for anyone.

**Mr Irving:** So I never mentioned it to Fred afterwards but I always remember that particular case, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And then if we turn now to 1969 and the developments in 1969.

**Mr Irving:** Well, yes. Here again the agitation against the United Kingdom Government creating a law on the Isle of Man by order in council in the UK and it was decided we would avoid this sort of thing and say if there is going to be a law, we are going to pass it and we don't want it by order in council and we all have peculiar ideas from time to time but I remember in '69 I proposed to Tynwald that they should inform the Commonwealth meeting of Prime Ministers in the Commonwealth of the UK ministers forcing UK domestic policy on the Isle of Man. Tynwald agreed to this. Goodness knows why I fought for that one. And 1969 was the year in which we issued the 50 penny note and it was a year when, in the United Kingdom, there was great fuss in the House of Commons about the dreaded heptagon, were they called? It is heptagon. So it is a heptagon, is it? Anyway this dreaded coin, the 50 penny coin, they didn't want that and I did a piece on Granada television, BBC television and BBC radio and then it got in the papers and I told people if they wanted 50 penny notes to write to me, you see, and I paid the postage on all these things. I was a fool! All sorts of people asked for these notes. There was a fellow, not Lord Longford, Lord Longford in North Wales who liked to use them. Now I suppose he was going in the shop and they were accepting it because he wrote to me several times asking for some and eventually wrote to me and said, 'I won't trouble you any more, my bank are keeping a stock of them ready for me.' I had a letter from Ian McLeod of the British Government. I don't know what he was. He wouldn't be Chancellor but something like that. He wanted one and I sold - sold! at no profit to myself - a heck of a lot of these 50 penny notes. We brought it out, you see, just at the time when people were saying we don't want this big awful coin.

**Mr Doyle:** This was the small blue note, was it?

**Mr Irving:** Was it blue? I don't remember what colour they were now but you see it was when they weren't going to have the ten bob note in England, were they? So that was 1969.

**Mr Doyle:** And in 1970, the Sports Council was set up. Was that -

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I think it was great having a Sports Council and I proposed it as a Private Member's Scheme in Tynwald. But if there is any credit in doing this, I think it ought to go to the late Curwen Clague who did an awful lot in sport in the Isle of Man. He must be known to a lot of people as organising and Commander-in-Chief, if you like, of all the cycle racing in the Island but he was interested in all sport. He was editor of the green final, the weekly Saturday night sports paper and later of the Isle of Man Examiner and Curwen Clague kept on to me about we ought to have a Sports Council and so Tynwald agreed and we got our

Sports Council. I think I was chairman from 1971 to '81. I didn't ask to be chairman and was probably most unsuitable because I believe in sport for everybody except myself. You know, sport for all and physical exercise for some, but not me.

**Mr Doyle:** The powerboat racing would take some stamina.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, but that's fun. That's not sport! Anyway, they have done a lot more now, we now have this wonderful place near the Quarterbridge and the new swimming pool is going to be down there and then aren't they having a sports hall built. Certainly the education authority have been very good in providing sporting facilities at the schools and, I believe, making those facilities available out of school hours to the public generally.

**Mr Doyle:** And what were the other issues in 1970?

**Mr Irving:** Well, here again we were really having a good try on cutting down the powers of the Lieutenant-Governor and another private thing I did, if I remember was the appointment of a committee on the Common Market.

**Mr Doyle:** What was the thinking behind that?

**Mr Irving:** Well, if the United Kingdom joins the Common Market, and this was as late as 1970, what's going to happen to the Isle of Man? Do we join? Do we stay out completely or do we try and get a special relationship? As it turned out, we got a special relationship. People talk about us having an association with them. We have no association in one sense. The word 'association' in relation to the European Community means a special treaty with obligations and things we have got to do and so on. What we wanted was a trading relationship, that we could send all our exports to the United Kingdom and the rest of the Community without facing duties, import taxes, and so on, and we had to find out a lot about this Common Market proposal and we had a committee of which Deemster Moore was Chairman, Charles Kerruish, a member, John Bolton, J B Bolton, a member, Norman Crowe - Norman Crowe was member for Michael with a great interest in agriculture - and we engaged a legal gentleman, a QC, a Mr Maurice Bathurst, later Sir Maurice Bathurst, and made several trips to the United Kingdom where we were well received by the Home Office people and so on and we found them very helpful and we got what we asked for, which was free trade. We didn't want any of the other obligations and we were given more than we asked for. We were given a guarantee that it wouldn't affect our rights of citizens of the Isle of Man in the UK, our relationship with the UK, and we were told that anybody in the Isle of Man, who had certain qualifications, could take a job in the Community and could work in the Community and the qualifications were at least one grandparent who wasn't Manx, who was United Kingdom born, you see, or at least one parent born in the United Kingdom, or that the person concerned had lived in the United Kingdom for a minimum of five years. Right? Now those people were given all the rights of citizens of the UK in the Community whereas someone who had four Manx grandparents, two Manx parents, born in the Isle of Man and had not lived in the UK for five years, they didn't have all the rights of a citizen of the Community. I don't know, I am hoping that the census we have had recently will indicate how many people are involved. It had been said 12,000 or something. I find it very difficult to believe that 12,000 people in the Isle of Man had four Manx grandparents. Three, fair enough, two or one. All four, I don't think there are that many but we will see. They haven't published the figures yet. So we got what we asked for.

**Mr Doyle:** And the formal part of that came in Protocol 3, I think that is right, isn't it, Protocol 3 to the Act of Accession. At the meetings with the UK authorities, do you remember Protocol 3 being drafted round a table or... How did that come about?

**Mr Irving:** It didn't. It just suddenly appeared after all our discussions.

**Mr Doyle:** From the UK? Did the UK send it?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, and then they told us, Mr Rippon told us. I said at this meeting when the Channel Islands were there and the Isle of Man representatives, I said I wasn't sure this was what we asked for and I was a bit rude to Mr Geoffrey Rippon and I said, 'Do you want us to

go back and tell people that this is what we've got?' And then there was some slight change but it wasn't very much and in the end, when Rippon came over here afterwards, I apologised to him and said, 'I didn't realise you've given us more than we have asked for but things....' There were one or two other things in it.

**Mr Doyle:** There were various meetings and the main concern was on the export side, to be able to trade without barriers and then it was the UK who produced this draft Protocol 3 at the meeting.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was a completely new Protocol. We were very pleased with it but we were told the position now is you either accept these terms or the Isle of Man will be completely independent and we will arrange that you are a completely independent state and can apply for membership of the Commonwealth and so on. We must tell you that if you were independent we could not continue this, we could not continue that, a non-expensive thing they could not continue was diplomatic representation. I believe it is possible to have, if you like, maximum freedom without being completely independent because it is the last bit that costs so much. We want the United Kingdom Government to pay for the cost of the items and still have the freedom and we said, 'Now what would we like to do now that we can't, that we haven't got the freedom to do it?' We are restricted by international agreements but all international agreements applying to the Isle of Man now, we have either asked to be party to it or agreed to be party to it. None of them have been forced on us. But you see, if we had said, oh, we will go for complete independence, the first thing we would have asked for were the very terms that were being offered. You see?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** We might not get them.

**Mr Doyle:** No, because this is very interesting this aspect, you remember the meetings with Geoffrey Rippon when Protocol 3 was produced?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I do remember.

**Mr Doyle:** And was it really produced... If I am overstating it, tell me, but it was on the basis of take it or leave it ....?

**Mr Irving:** We had a pretty good idea and I can remember one thing. There was a very small, grey-haired gentleman there who stood up at the back of the room - there weren't a heck of a lot of us - from the Channel Islands contingent and he said, 'I must tell you Mr Rippon that you have no right to assume that we are going to agree to this until the 12 pleas of Sark have discussed it and considered it. I cannot say that we will accept it.' Now, 12 pleas of Sark... Have you ever been to Sark?

**Mr Doyle:** No.

**Mr Irving:** It is like saying, the government of the Calf of Man agreeing to it and we all laughed like mad because he had summed up -

**Mr Doyle:** During the meeting?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. It is a lovely place, Sark. I've been there and it is the Seigneur who has the say anyway, not the pleas, I would think, and this guy was good. He said he had to get the approval of the chief of pleas. Then our senior man from the Home Office came over with what would happen on paper if we became completely independent and it was obvious that we wanted this association - I've said it, I mustn't say association - this relationship with the Community and then if there is a question of complete independence afterwards that should be superimposed anyway because the thing is to go for this close contact situation that we were in and I think we did very well. We got everything we wanted. Well, we didn't do well, it was the United Kingdom people. I have attacked them often enough in Tynwald but I must they were very good over this immunity thing and the Channel Islands, you see, they have the same Protocol but we get every year, I think this year we are getting about £2 million, just under £2.5 million, from the UK which are

Community import duties. They don't get this. We get it because we are associated with the Common Purse but we are getting nearly £2.5 million in import duties so we were a bit fortunate there. It is the only place where I've ever seen the word 'Manxmen, Manxman' or 'Channel Islanders' in Protocol 3 with any legal meaning.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, they use Isle of Man worker in the control of employment legislation but they don't use Manxman.

**Mr Irving:** I am sorry, you were going to ask me something.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, the drafting of Protocol 3, I think, Article 4 and the equality of treatment and no discrimination against nationality.

**Mr Irving:** No discrimination, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you think that has caused the Island or will cause the Island difficulties?

**Mr Irving:** I don't know. It could do on agreements we have before the question of the Common Market. Now one has got to remember, too, that we have got this Free Travel Act where the people in the United Kingdom are free to come and live here. Now, because of no discrimination we have now got to say that three to four hundred million people are entitled to come and live on the Isle of Man because we mustn't discriminate against all the others by saying only Irish or UK. So we have had to change our immigration laws.

**Mr Doyle:** Today we are going to cover the period from 1970 to 1976. Mr Irving what was happening in 1970 on the Isle of Man from a political point of view?

**Mr Irving:** Well, if we consider, say, the end of 1970, I put a motion before Tynwald, privately, it wasn't on behalf of any particular part of government, that government form a sports council. Now it was agreed, of course. It was agreed unanimously but I must say that I was almost forced into this by an old friend of mine, sadly no longer with us, called Curwen Clague and this man, Curwen Clague was editor of the Examiner at the time. He had been editor of the Saturday evening paper, the Green Final which was a sporting paper and he had done everything he could to promote sport in the Isle of Man. He thought we ought to be an Island of sport. To me, perhaps his greatest achievement was in connection with the cycle races. I don't know, he probably started having these cycle races and he certainly promoted them over the years and put an awful lot of work into them. Now, if we think in terms of 1971 -

**Mr Doyle:** Can we, just before we leave the Sports Council, you said it was a unanimous vote, during the debate was there any opposition from members or any points made?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, a certain member... You see, in the motion I put the formation of a Sports Council and their duties in very general terms and also I think it was the final bit we talked about government financial support, without naming any figures of course, and certain members thought this was a bit too vague and I should have produced a paper showing what they could do and how they would do it and where they would do it and so on, and also what control there would be of expenditure, and I put it out the control of the expenditure would be exactly the same as for the Arts Council, that they would put proposals forward to the Finance Board and they might get permission to bring it to Tynwald and Tynwald would control, and certainly the Finance Board would control it. So several members did get a bit concerned about the financial aspect and in the end of course they voted for it.

**Mr Doyle:** Can you remember the identity of the members? Does anything stick in your mind?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I think one's got to be fair. Obviously the Chairman of the Finance Board, Sir John Bolton, and... He wasn't 'Sir' then, was he? No. Mr John Bolton and Mr Alf Devereau, they were chairman and member of the Finance Board and they were naturally interested, but then some other people tagged on.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, but I'm interested, Mr Irving, you used the reference to motion rather than resolution. (Mr Irving laughs). Did some people mix those terms up when dealing with the business

before Tynwald or the House of Keys?

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Yes. Practically everybody. I'm just being awkward, I think, but sometimes they talk about a resolution before Tynwald in the past and I don't want anybody to get the idea, you see, that that means it was a motion resolved. Until Tynwald has voted on it or indicated their approval, a motion cannot be a resolution if it's not been resolved. I'm just being awkward, I think.

**Mr Doyle:** You've raised this issue with other politicians -

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Yes, very senior people!

**Mr Doyle:** Anyone in particular?

**Mr Irving:** No. Previous Speakers, shall we say!

**Mr Doyle:** Right, and just on a general point, when you used to present motions to Tynwald, on the Sports Council motion, at the end of the day everyone voted in favour of it although there were some points of concern over spending and over control, but before the debate would members come up to you and say 'I've got a problem with this. I want to raise a point' or would they take you completely by surprise.

**Mr Irving:** I know members come and say 'I'm totally opposed to this' and will attack it, shall we say. I cannot remember anybody saying they'd got a problem with it and they're going to ask me about so-and-so. No, they take you by surprise.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, the speaker will take you by surprise.

**Mr Irving:** Now, I must say, in this case when I said it was unanimous, members were asked by the Governor, those in favour say aye; those against say no. No one said 'no', so the Governor declared it passed nem con? Is that it? What is it in Latin? You're a legal gentleman.

**Mr Doyle:** So it was passed unanimously?

**Mr Irving:** But anyway, he said passed unanimously.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and are you pleased with the way the Sports Council has progressed and that the National Sports Stadium -

**Mr Irving:** When I think, I think we were given... the Arts Council were getting about £4,000 a year, that may be quite a wrong figure but anyway we were getting £25,000, I think, and I think we were given another amount which we could lend but I think the £25,000 was expenditure and then we had to decide, as time went on, how do we devote this money to the improvement of excellence in a few people, how much of it, you see, and how much of it just for general sport, sport generally. If we got someone who was particularly good at a particular sport should we help them financially. We sorted it out and I'm so pleased now that thanks to Curwen Clague in way, not altogether but if he hadn't arranged for someone to put this forward we might not have our Sports Centre now.

**Mr Doyle:** Quite.

**Mr Irving:** We found on the Sports Council a big demand was for a running track, nothing else, it was way ahead of anything else. People wanted a running track, a cinder track, any sort of track, and we were particularly pleased. It didn't mature in my time, I'm afraid. You see, the Finance Board at the time weren't as generous as the following Finance Board. I noticed that as late as 1981. There was a change.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, but it was a very important development, wasn't it, the setting up of a Sports Council because the number of people now locally that are involved in sport and the number of people that come to the Isle of Man to play sport, it brings an awful lot of people over here.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it does, it does. Yes. I think so, yes. The numbers that used to come and play hockey

are terrific.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, well that's the setting up of the Sports Council. What was happening in the following year?

**Mr Irving:** Well, if we take 1972, one thing I do remember then, well, I thought it was time we'd another look at the Common Purse agreement which, if we are recording anything, I would like to record the fact that it is a voluntary agreement. If we were given a few month's notice we could come out of it because a lot of people seem to think it was forced on us. I thought it was time - I use the word 'commission', committee is the same thing, commission sounds more important though - I felt it was time we had a commission of professional consultants to examine the agreement and advise Tynwald whether they thought we ought to continue, whether it was in the interests of the Island, and so on. Tynwald turned me down. Then in 1975 I had another go and Tynwald approved to have a look at the Common Purse agreement and it was decided that nothing was going to be done, we would stay with it.

**Mr Doyle:** Because the year before, in 1971, there was an election where you stood in East Douglas, I think.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, stood in East Douglas. That wasn't the first time surely. No, it was in East Douglas, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** About '66 was the first time.

**Mr Irving:** Well, I made the mistake in 1981 of going back to West Douglas, where I live, -

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and you were unsuccessful?

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Yes, I was. One reason, a very tiny one, they probably thought I was pretty awful anyway, one reason 'Why are you coming back and disturbing us in West Douglas. We have two good members here.' And they did have two good members and the two good members got back, and I had to go.

**Mr Doyle:** And in '71 you became the Acting Speaker of the Keys?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it wasn't a very arduous job. I wasn't given much to do. I don't know why I mentioned that one.

**Mr Doyle:** Can I take you briefly to a headline in the Manx Star on 16th October 1971, or 11th to 16th October 1971, with a wonderful photograph of you, 'And end a government by guesswork.' Do you remember that debate in 1971?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I do, because we had been told by the economist who had a look at the Island, a Dr Thurston, that it was time we had more information about our economy before we took decisions affecting it and someone else, some other people, I forget who they were now, advised us that we ought really to have an economic survey. So I was at the time Chairman of the Economic Committee of the Executive Council, so once again I had to go to Tynwald with another inquiry, another survey. I felt we were just governing by guesswork as far as the economy was concerned and Tynwald agreed to a preliminary survey by a company of management consultants and then we had a full-scale survey and eventually, well of course we got a government economist and now we have an economic section or division, whichever they call it, in the Treasury. So that one worked out pretty well, I felt, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** That was 1971 and then in 1972 you talked about the Common Purse Agreement. You were Chairman of the Tourist Board at that time, weren't you, in 1972?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I was Chairman of the Tourist Board and I was tired of the Tourist Board saying we ought to have duty-free.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and you had a problem with the steam railways?

**Mr Irving:** And then in the same year I was Chairman of the Tourist Board year, I proposed to Tynwald that as Lord Ailsa who was running if you like, operating the steam railway, that since he wasn't prepared to carry on under government terms, the government were a bit involved, that the government should buy the Isle of Man Railway Company and operate the Douglas/Port Erin line.

**Mr Doyle:** Was that agreed?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, that was agreed and we see it still working. I had a particular interest in the railway of course. I mean, I used it for two years between Peel and Douglas every day, twice a day.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and also bringing people into those wonderful exhibitions, the trade exhibitions.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, when they hired them.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** Now what did we hire four... Was it three trains to take as many people as come to Douglas and back for £25, and then they said, 'Well, can you make it £35?' After the event of course!

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and you were very kind and allowed the increase?

**Mr Irving:** Very kind! I thought I was getting good value for money.

**Mr Doyle:** Was there interest in the 12-mile limit in the '70s?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. All throughout quite a period there, there was agitation for a 12-mile limit. A lot of people feeling that inside the 12 miles should be for Manx fishermen only. But some of these things are like that. Also the power of Manx Radio, another subject, that went on for a very long period with considerable agitation on our part to get some satisfaction there.

**Mr Doyle:** There was that wonderful quote from Mr Colebourn, what was that again?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, that was great. He'd a great sense of humour. Mr T H Colebourn, founder of Colebourn's claimed publicly that he wanted a great deal of strength for Manx Radio 'for it should be heard as far as the foothills of the Ural Mountains'.

**Mr Doyle:** Excellent.

**Mr Irving:** And then we used to... I think now and again of the national anthem was 'free as the sweet mountain air'. The mountain air wasn't very free at the time, as far as Manx Radio was concerned.

**Mr Doyle:** And anything else happening in, say, the '72?

**Mr Irving:** Well, '72, if it's of any interest, we were anxious to increase sporting facilities for tourists and of course for local people and Scottish and Newcastle Brewery, a very big organisation with plenty of money, said they wanted to build a championship 18-hole championship golf course at the Point of Ayre, what people thought was quite unsuitable a place, you know, the ground wasn't what you'd imagine a golf course would be like but the experts they sent over decided that it was ideal. Also, as Chairman of the Tourist Board I was involved in this and had meetings with lots of... several, anyway, organisations in the Isle of Man, preservationists, conservationists, the bird society and so on, and in the end there was a great deal of opposition to it by these people, in fact the final straw that broke the back of this particular camel was that the area where it was proposed to build a moderate sized, single storey hotel was a place where the terns nested at the Point of Ayre, and that was it.

**Mr Doyle:** So it never went ahead?

**Mr Irving:** No, it didn't go on. Disappointing but I suppose some people have to protect things here.

We were on the other side trying to promote the change anyway.

**Mr Doyle:** And it was a great time for Europe as well, wasn't it? What was known as the Common Market in those days.

**Mr Irving:** Yes. In 1973 the Common Market regulations came into force and since then there have been people time to time complaining about the flood of regulations and directives we get. Now, we are not members, we are not associated with the Community even, we have a relationship. We are not associated because associate membership sometimes can be used, by certain people, to change it to full membership or even a closer attachment, so we just have this free trade arrangement with the Community and that is all we want. Now we get a lot of regulations and directives from the Community but most of them are on customs matters. Now since we have our own customs in the Isle of Man, customs and excise, it is essential that they have all the information on trading inside the Community and the Community with the rest of the world, because we are in this free trade agreement with them and it suits us to follow them in this, in fact we have to if there is going to be free trade. And then we get other regulations with, shall we say, requirements in relation to exports from the Island. I mean, one was the Community decided that meat brought into the Community from outside the Community - it didn't say anything about their own hygienic arrangements - had to be dealt with in a certain way and under very hygienic, if you like, conditions and we had to create a new abattoir. We do get that sort of thing but that's an extreme case where we had to go to a lot of trouble for our exports. It didn't matter about Manx meat. But on the other hand people making machinery parts or making all sorts of things that they do in the industrial sector in the Island, it is important that they know what the requirements are on these items if they are going to be exported to the Community. But it was very good and I was very pleased when... I had to go to Tynwald of course earlier, before '73, and put over our arrangements what we had arranged with the Community.

**Mr Doyle:** Because the... you've discussed it briefly, the Protocol 3 arrangements were very good for the Island.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, they were more than we asked for but we were glad to get it. It indicated to me the way the Home Office were really looking after us.

**Mr Doyle:** And you were involved in those negotiations?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I proposed, I think it was in '69, that if Britain is going to join a thing called the Common Market, it's about time we appointed a committee to find out - it was committee at that time, not commission - appointed a committee to negotiate with the United Kingdom on the position of the Isle of Man. So naturally, proposing it and getting it through Tynwald I was made a member of the committee and our chairman was the late Deemster Moore.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and you were pressing, I doubt whether you will take credit for it, but I hear people telling me that you were the one pressing for the free trade provisions.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I think it is absolutely essential. We import enough things from the United Kingdom and you cannot expect industrialists in the Isle of Man to pay an import duty for exports to the United Kingdom or anywhere else in the Community, nor can you expect the industrialists... The agriculturalists, not the industrialists, and one must remember too that in the case of the Community the word 'agriculture' includes fisheries. So that this was the only thing that I was interested in and then we had a look at certain proposals of theirs on the right of local people to go to England, to work in England, and so on, and they decided in Protocol 3, without us even asking for it, that the relationship between local people and the United Kingdom would remain as it was.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you know who was responsible for the actual drafting of the Protocol? Would that have been the UK side, or the Isle of Man side?

**Mr Irving:** Well, the UK side really. We put forward various things in ours but the Protocol 3 had a bit more in it than we were talking about and there was nothing that I'd object to. One thing that caused a bit of trouble, or could cause a bit of trouble, shall we say, was the

requirement that we must not discriminate between the member states. Now we would expect to have a special relationship with the United Kingdom that we wouldn't have in many respects with other countries and one example is if people in the United Kingdom are free to come and live here at any time then we have to say, well the citizens of any European Community country are entitled to do the same and I don't know if this is going to cause any trouble, it might not, but it's a disturbing thought to some of us that somewhere between three hundred million and four hundred million, I'll speak to the nearest hundred million, people are entitled to come here and live. I don't know but it applies in other ways too. We mustn't give special trading terms to the United Kingdom but I think there is something about the Community I would like to mention and that is, Protocol 3 applies both to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man and we work very closely with them but on the other hand because of our closer relationship in financial matters with the United Kingdom than the Channel Islands have, because of the Common Purse arrangement, we get a proportion of the import duties put on by the United Kingdom, of course, on imports from the rest of the world, which is known as the common external tariff which we're inside with the Channel Islands and we have to apply duty. Anything we import as direct which is very little, we have to apply a duty on and the funds, in the case of the United Kingdom when they apply this import duty they are allowed to deduct ten per cent for expenses and the rest has to go to Brussels with one exception, they take a proportion of these import duties - that's not the correct name but that's what they are - they take a proportion from the Isle of Man and it is based on our relative populations and we get I would say this year, probably £2,400,000, maybe £2,200,000, maybe £2,500,000, certainly over £2m from these imports duties instead of it going to Brussels, so the Common Purse does give us a bit of money there that we wouldn't normally get.

**Mr Doyle:** And the issue of Europe in the '70s, the late '60s and the early '70s, plainly it was an issue that you were very keenly interested in, as was Deemster Moore and some other politicians, but was it an issue that gripped the great Manx public? Were the public interested in the issue of the Common Market?

**Mr Irving:** I don't know. Not generally, no. They're not very interested now.

**Mr Doyle:** Mr Irving, when you were considering the European issue, did the government engage any consultants, any outside consultants, as it's a very complex area?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I mentioned in Tynwald that we ought to have a constitutional lawyer and they engage the services of one, and I don't think that was approved. They laughed at it, but eventually we did get a QC, Mr Maurice Bathurst who, we were told, would be very good at this sort of thing and we found him very good.

**Mr Doyle:** And did he assist in the negotiations?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. He had more to do with it than any of us of course.

**Mr Doyle:** Would you go down to the Home Office in London.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, we would go down to the Home Office for a day or two. We'd go to London for a day or two and see the Home Office people and any other members of the United Kingdom Civil Service, if you like, who could help us in these matters. We got the impression that they were very helpful and the results show us they were.

**Mr Doyle:** And were you concerned -

**Mr Irving:** Because these were very special, I mean, the Protocol to the Treaty for us.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, an exception. And were you concerned -

**Mr Irving:** We worked closely with the Channel Islands throughout the whole thing.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. Were you concerned with the issue of work permits and immigration control?

**Mr Irving:** We made it quite clear that we intended to continue with work permits and hoped, and

expected, and took it for granted, if you like, that we could continue with work permits in the future. We didn't say very much about the control of immigration because the Channel Islands were already doing that and the subject was never raised. So we thought, well, we joined at the time when this was being done by one of the parties.

**Mr Doyle:** And how was the actual Protocol 3, the production of it, was there a drafting meeting when your people were putting drafting amendments to the Protocol? How was it presented?

**Mr Irving:** No. It was just presented at a meeting of the Islands.

**Mr Doyle:** The UK Government presented it?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. Geoffrey Ripon, who later became Lord Ripon was in the chair and I had told him, I didn't know much about it, you see, I think it was just general and I said 'We'll just have to see how this goes, when we get back and when talking among ourselves' and I wasn't very complimentary to him. So he came over here soon afterwards and I said, 'In front of all these people I would like to apologise to you because, since I read this properly and thought about it, it's excellent. It's just what we require.' But there's a bit in here about Sark. Their representative said it must be considered by the Chief Pleas.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, that's it. And were you given any other options? Was it Protocol 3 or -

**Mr Irving:** Oh, well, the option, yes. You're not recording this, are you? I didn't know this was being recorded. I am sorry to be so verbose. Yes, we were told, a senior gentleman, in fact the person in the Home Office responsible for dealing with the Islands, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, head of the department, came and he gave it to us in writing, too, that we either accepted these terms or we would have to be completely independent. In other words they were offering the Isle of Man complete independence.

**Mr Doyle:** And that wasn't attractive to you?

**Mr Irving:** Absolutely complete. It wasn't. The first thing we would do when we became completely independent would be to ask the European Community if we could have Protocol 3, so we had nothing to lose because we assume that the offer still stands. We weren't interested certainly at the time. In those days we had... The constitutional arrangements between the Isle of Man and the United Kingdom were much better than they were now, but even then we could see that it would be an extremely expensive business and millions of pounds being lost every year. They said we cannot do any diplomatic representation for the Isle of Man, even on payment we will refuse to do it, and if we had to open offices in Brussels and run them and pay some other country for doing our diplomatic stuff and, what is also important, paying for membership through the United Kingdom of so many international agreements and bodies, being party to those, we'd then pay to be party to general agreement on tariff and trade, world trade organisation, OECD, all sorts of things the United Kingdom pay, but we would have to pay.

**Mr Doyle:** But were there any MHKs at the time pushing for full independence?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I don't know. I don't know of, say, Edgar Mann. Edgar Mann wasn't there at the time but I know Edgar has mentioned since then we ought to have accepted it. I know that Mr Jim Cain, who was Speaker of the Keys, was very much in favour of complete independence and I am pretty sure that the member for Ayre, Mr Edgar Quine, who has also said in Tynwald on occasions that he would like to see complete independence but no one has ever told me what they would do with it. I want the maximum independence except for the little bit at the end which is the only difference from what we've got and complete independence, which is the expensive bit. I don't know but it would be interesting to know what the terms of complete independence would be in our relation to the UK. I think they would try to put us off. They would feel, under the United Nations arrangements, they couldn't stop us but I don't think it would be in the interests of the United Kingdom to have a completely independent Isle of Man in the middle of the Irish Sea.

**Mr Doyle:** And while we're talking about independence, in the '70s the Governor's powers were, in any

event, being reduced.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, I mean, all this time the Governor's powers, particularly a bit later, 1975, were being reduced. And they were enormous changes and we were getting in a much happier position as time was going on. For those who felt we were going to run our own show, as I say, paddle our own canoe in the sheltered waters of the great ship United Kingdom, and no, there was no demand for independence at the time and we thought, if they're offering it now, we can come back and have it any other time, because we want these terms, they weren't imposed on us in any way. And you see I always argue that so many Islands exist in a relatively prosperous state because they are uncommon and the last place in the world for an Island that exists by being uncommon is in a Common Market, and their policies anyway of the European Community, or whatever they call themselves nowadays, the European Economic Area if you like, they are made in the main of course for industrial countries, large industrial countries. We must retain the right to be different otherwise who's going to come here on holiday, going to come here to work and to live, to establish a business here? It only creates more pretty heavy transport costs, doesn't it?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. The removal of the executive powers of the Governor from time to time, that was happening in the '70s, is that right?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. In 1975 it was the beginning of a very substantial reduction in the Governor's duties and powers, for example, all executive powers he held, and don't forget he presented the budget in those days, it was the Governor's budget. There was a Finance Board but there wasn't a Financial Department as there is now and there wasn't a Treasury, the way it is now. I'd a feeling some of the early years, that the government secretary did government treasury in his spare time. It really was like that. So that he lost his executive powers, his financial powers and almost all powers in relation to the work of boards. It was decided in that year that he could continue to preside over Tynwald but the Legislative Council should not have him presiding there because of differences of opinion from time to time between the Keys and the Council and we didn't feel that the Governor should be in a position to influence those matters. And then we also decided, a bit later, no need for the Governor to attend Executive Council.

**Mr Doyle:** How was that put to the Governor? Would you phone him up and say 'We have decided you don't have to come to the next meeting.', or how was that dealt with the Governor? Do you remember?

**Mr Irving:** I cannot remember the words used but I did speak, when I was chairman, to the Lieutenant-Governor, very politely of course, and he said if I was chairman, I ought to conduct the business.

**Mr Doyle:** How did you react to that?

**Mr Irving:** Well, really, he was a charming man, Governor John Paul, great. A very popular Governor he was. He was the last of the full Governors here before... He had enormous powers of patronage. They seem to be with the present system of ministerial control that the Chief Minister has inherited the powers of patronage of the Governor. I have no objection to that but it's the way it goes.

**Mr Doyle:** So, just to set this in context, in 1977 you became Chairman of Executive Council for the first time. That's right?

**Mr Irving:** That's right, yes, in 1977.

**Mr Doyle:** And it was in 1977 that you contacted the Governor saying -

**Mr Irving:** Oh, it had been made clear to him before that. Several references to the subject before that.

**Mr Doyle:** But it was the first year that the Governor didn't attend Executive Council meetings was when you were appointed chairman?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. He probably came to the first one or something like that.

- Mr Doyle:** So that reminds me of that very brief clash you had with the Governor on Tynwald Hill when he wouldn't receive a petition, the first year you were elected as a Member of the House of Keys. Your relationship with the Governor after 1977 was fine?
- Mr Irving:** My relationship with seven Governors of the Isle of Man has been very good indeed. I liked them all. I never quarrelled with them -
- Mr Irving:** About this time, yes, about this time.
- Mr Doyle:** There was a difference of opinion with one of the Governors?
- Mr Irving:** You are asking me if I had a difference of opinion with one of the Governors. Oh, well, there was one thing and that was about this time, you know, the early '70s shall we say, the Governor in Tynwald produced two names, he made a nomination of two people for a particular committee, or board, or whatever it was, some government body, and there was a feeling among some members that this was the Government House crowd again, you see, and it was suggested that I might be brave enough to oppose it. So very nicely I told the Governor, in Tynwald, publicly, this sounded as if it was the Government House crowd again and a bit more than that, and then I said 'Do you think it is possible that some day we might break out of this magic circle and our people not in the Government House crowd will be very capable of carrying out the duties of these posts' and the Governor said 'I agree with the Hon.. Member Mr Irving. He is quite right. I withdraw these nominations.'
- Mr Doyle:** Excellent, very good!
- Mr Doyle:** In this session we are hoping to cover the period from 1976 to 1981. Can we start in 1976, there was an election and I think you stood in East Douglas?
- Mr Irving:** Yes and fortunately I was successful in being re-elected. I was pleased too that I was able to continue with two particular jobs which interested me very much and that was Chairman of the Tourist Board and Chairman of the Sports Council.
- Mr Doyle:** And was there a lot of talk about tourism in 1976 in the election campaign?
- Mr Irving:** Oh yes, certainly in East Douglas. A lot of people in East Douglas weren't directly involved in tourism but an awful lot of them were indirectly and it was my favourite subject in nearly all my time in Tynwald, the promotion of the tourist industry. I don't say that I was ever able to achieve very much but I was certainly interested in it.
- Mr Doyle:** You talked about the great barrier to Manx tourism.
- Mr Irving:** Oh yes, I was criticised at the time for saying that I believed the biggest barrier to the development of tourism was the high air fares and I think even many years later we can say the same thing.
- Mr Doyle:** Yes, and was there anything else happening in 1976?
- Mr Irving:** Well, all sorts of things, you see. I tended to bring up subjects in which I was particularly involved and not the normal round of things in government. It is a bit embarrassing for me talking to you about these things because I'm not just trying to promote things I helped to achieve, shall we say, and life went on as usual, with all the other problems of government that I haven't mentioned.
- Mr Doyle:** But in 1977 you became Chairman of Executive Council?
- Mr Irving:** Yes, that was an interesting change.
- Mr Doyle:** And what else was happening in 1977?
- Mr Irving:** Well, I remember one thing we were particularly interested in was the forthcoming or the

1979 Millennium celebrations and we felt too that the Governor who was extremely interested and was a great help in planning the Millennium Year, we thought it would be nice if he could stay as Governor during that year and Tynwald asked the Home Office, of course, if his term of office could be extended to cover the Millennium Year. That was in 1977 and if I may move, in 1978, onto the subject of a Lieutenant-Governor there was great agitation and effort and legislation was passed dealing with the powers and duties of the Lieutenant-Governor and when Governor John Paul, who was Governor then, left we were going to have, because of all these changes, we were going to have a Governor in what I started to call a vice-regal role, representing Her Majesty and not taking part in political affairs, very few powers or duties, but as the next Governor who came was in this vice-regal role, Governor Cecil, he considered his job was to be an honest broker between the Isle of Man Government and the Home Office.

**Mr Doyle:** In 1979 which was the Millennium Year, there would be a lot of preparation for that. Was it a success in your view, Millennium Year?

**Mr Irving:** I think it was a great success.

**Mr Doyle:** We are still on 1979, Millennium Year.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, a great number of guests and I think a great number of guests but a very great number of tourists. It was a particularly good year for the tourist industry of the Isle of Man and there were so many happenings that local people were able to see and take part in, and so on, and it was a great year of celebration. It was across the year too, when we had the Odin's Raven trip from Norway and then of course we invited King Olaf of Norway to come here during the celebrations and to our delight and great surprise, he did so. He came in his destroyer Trondheim. A bit of trouble with the boat off the north of Scotland, I know, and then he had trouble with his yacht the Norge and even when he was here in the Isle of Man, Norge wasn't working very well for him. But he was a very charming man and didn't want a lot of fuss of people accompanying him everywhere he went and very little security and I remember he went to Peel breakwater to speak to the people who were fishing there and everybody, they were saying to each other, "Who's that?" "Who's that?" He was there probably with someone else, just one other person.

**Mr Doyle:** And did you visit him on his yacht in Port St Mary harbour?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, the last night of his stay. Well, he started off with... We had a banquet when he arrived in a marquee on Government House on the small lawn and, you know, it was so wonderful inside with flowers and shrubs and carpets and lights, I thought, 'Don't we do things well in the Isle of Man!' I was really proud of it and my job that evening was to speak about his visit and welcome him to the Island and then I think a day later we had a Garden Party and one of my jobs in part of the lawn was to introduce local people and so on, but he was a charming man.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you enjoy the party on the yacht?

**Mr Irving:** Oh, the party on the yacht, yes, I enjoyed it because the Admiral there, one of his Admirals, said to me, 'The ADC, the King's ADC, doesn't seem to be interested in looking after him, he's propping the bar up, would you?' and I said, 'Yes, with pleasure.' So I had a very pleasant evening with him.

**Mr Doyle:** And in 1980, that's when you had your honour, the CBE? That's correct?

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you receive a letter from the Prime Minister? How did that come about?

**Mr Irving:** Well, it was a letter addressed to me and then it had on the bottom of the envelope 'From the Office of the Prime Minister' and I gather it was Governor Cecil, he'd put it forward and surprisingly I got it and was very pleased.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you have any hesitation in accepting?

**Mr Irving:** Not really, no. I doubt whether I deserved it but what's that got to do with it. No, no.

**Mr Doyle:** And the 1980s, the start of the 1980s?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, 1980, it was -

**Mr Doyle:** Customs and Excise time.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was the year in which the United Kingdom Customs and Excise ceased to operate in the Isle of Man and the Isle of Man Customs and Excise took over. We had another step forward in another degree of independence in having our own Customs and Excise but of course the Common Purse still continued. It is a voluntary arrangement and I keep stressing that because so many people think it is forced on us, and it goes on year after year in arguments about whether it's a good thing or not. I proposed a commission on that in 1970 and Tynwald threw it out. I had a very bad score in votes that day. Then in 1979 I had another go that there was another examination of the Common Purse agreement.

**Mr Doyle:** Going back to 1979 was the Representation of the People Bill progressed with in 1979 as far as -

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it's the old question of people having got to equal value and the same number of votes. You see, for many years we've had parts of the Island where residents or electors can vote for two members. In Rushen, the constituency of Rushen and the constituency of Onchan, they vote for three members and this is very unfair, I believe, when people in certain constituencies have a much more valuable voting power than people in other constituencies and I always felt that some day we could reorganise the constituencies. Now, I asked in 1970 for a commission on this particular subject and was turned down. I asked in 1979, Roy McDonald, the member for Peel, who seconded my previous proposal put a motion forward and so a commission was formed from people mainly outside Tynwald. I was chairman of the commission, I don't know why, but the point is in Tynwald, if you propose something and it's a committee, they either put you on it and make you chairman of it, a lot of members expect it by right, you see, and we had people from outside of the Island who were experienced in electoral proceedings, electoral law, and so on. Now I put the report to Tynwald in 1980, which was approved, and the commission had proposed either 24 one-member constituencies, 12 two-member, or 8 three-member, or 6 four-member, but all had the same number of members. They thought in the case of single-seat constituencies there was a danger that there would be excessive parochialism and I suppose it could be worse than it is now, or was, but they didn't like that. Now, I think I, at some stage, put to Tynwald they should all be two-seaters but I lost that, so that it is more or less the same situation now. There was a commission on boundaries of constituencies. They made certain proposals. I think they proposed taking a bit from one constituency and a bit to the other. They were doing it in a very half-hearted way, I thought. They did propose that the constituency of Glenfaba should be linked with Peel and two members because Glenfaba with one member had 1665 voters and Peel with one member had 2815. But Tynwald didn't approve.

**Mr Doyle:** It's obviously a matter you feel very strongly about.

**Mr Irving:** Mm, I do.

**Mr Doyle:** In the election last November 1996, I think you were on the radio shortly afterwards discussing -

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Yes, I know, talking on the same old thing. I do feel it is quite wrong that someone in Port Erin, shall we say, can vote for three Members of the House of Keys, whereas in the neighbouring place of Castletown, the people have one vote, as it were, for one member.

**Mr Doyle:** And you have been trying since the '70s, or maybe even earlier, to get it changed?

**Mr Irving:** I started in 1970 actually.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you regard it as a great disappointment not being able to change that system in your time in politics?

**Mr Irving:** No, I'm never disappointed in these things. I've tried many times putting forward things like this and I've been lucky and I don't complain when I lose and I don't really feel terribly disappointed. I always feel optimistic that some day someone will try again and it will go through.

**Mr Doyle:** So that was 1979. There was also population control, the question of population control that you were very interested in. Would you tell us something about that?

**Mr Irving:** Yes. Well, in January '79 I proposed to Tynwald that a select committee be appointed. Now it's unusual because I usually ask for a commission. But a select committee, it wasn't terribly important that the outside people were in this but when you're dealing with boundary changes and local arrangements like that it's better to have outsiders advising you and I proposed a committee be appointed to report on the policy to be adopted on population growth and the control of immigration with regard to social and economic stability and development in the Island. Tynwald agreed and I was nominated to this select committee, so I was really pretty optimistic at that stage, we would do something about the growth of population then and the control of population. I remember during a debate when I was nominated, I said I hope I could be relieved of some other less worthwhile ventures I was associated with in Tynwald because, apart from being Chairman of Executive Council, Chairman of the Tourist Board, Chairman of the Sports Council, I mentioned that I was a member of 16 boards, commissions and committees, apart from various sub-committees in the House of Keys, this was on the Tuesday and the following three days I had nine meetings, easing off towards the weekend, there were four on the Wednesday, three on the Thursday, two on the Friday. So that's how busy members were, I'm not saying I was in a different position in that case. Now, I think I should explain to you too, at the time when our expert opinions said that by the end of the century the population of the Island would be 94,000 if the present trend at that time, the then trend, continued. Now Tynwald voted 28 votes to 3. That was a good score but I don't think any action was taken on it.

**Mr Doyle:** It's still in the Government's programme to look at it.

**Mr Irving:** And I think it's important because, if I might just mention briefly. Because of the common travel area we have of the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man, and the fact that the people from these territories, from the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or Eire can come and live in the Isle of Man, that was all very well but when we were involved in a relationship with the Community, one part of Protocol 3, which was the part of the treaty dealing with the position of the Isle of Man, says 'There must not be discrimination between the member states of the Common Market', as I like to call it. It keeps changing its name. And therefore it meant that if we say that people from the United Kingdom can come and live here, we've got to say the same about the rest of the Community. Now, together with the European Economic Area and the European Union, if you take this as one European body which it is more or less, then we have now, or we had it then in 1979, and still do have this situation where I would think nearly four hundred million people are entitled to come and live in the Isle of Man. Now in 1979 there were no arrangements for controlling the population. People just came here and bought a house, or rented a house, and lived here. The same situation exists nowadays and I was very concerned that we should do something about it. Now a population select committee was set up but I don't think anything has been done yet. That was 1979. That's a very long time ago.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you... Just on a totally different subject now, as Chairman of Executive Council you would have had regular meetings with the Lieutenant-Governor. Is that correct? Would there be meetings -

**Mr Irving:** Not when I was chairman. Well, before I was chairman, the Governor took the Chair at the Executive Council and then some feelings were expressed in Tynwald just before I was chairman that did the Governor have to be there because that was the time when they were taking everything away from the Governor and it just happened, I don't think any

standing orders changed things, it just happened, he ceased to attend.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, I think the record shows that you had something to do with that but, leaving aside his lack of attendance at formal Executive Council meetings, would he... the media described you as the first Manx Prime Minister, (Mr Irving laughs) would the Lieutenant-Governor have invited you to Government Office once a week for a chat, or did you see a lot of him to discuss matters of policy, or did you ignore him? You must have had meetings with him?

**Mr Irving:** It's a difficult question. There are no record of meetings. Now, I know in later years, since then, the Chief Minister, for example, I think would have a date every week with the Governor to report to him. I don't remember.

**Mr Doyle:** But you remember in 1981 being summoned by the Lieutenant-Governor for a meeting on a birching issue.

**Mr Irving:** Oh, we're moving to 1981, yes. In 1981 a person had been sentenced to the birch. He was awarded six strokes and there was an appeal under the Judge of Appeal Deemster Hytner and the Governor asked me to come up to Government House in the afternoon when the appeal was being heard and when I got there, he explained that he had been on to the Home Secretary in the morning, which I feel might be a Mr Willie Whitelaw, Lord Whitelaw in those days, and he was told that the obligations of the United Kingdom Government to ensure that we must comply with our international obligations and reminded us that we knew it was the job of the United Kingdom Government to ensure that we did if we were going to be connected with the UK in these things. Here of course it's the question of the European Court of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom, a body quite unconnected with the European Union, or the Common Market, or the Economic Area, and so on, and they had said that they would not agree to flogging. Now I'm saying flogging because if one looks in the dictionary under birching, every dictionary I looked in and I looked in a lot of them, it says flogging. So to them it was flogging. To us, we say, 'No, no, it's not real flogging, it's only the birch.'

**Mr Doyle:** Whipping.

**Mr Irving:** But to them it is flogging and the United Kingdom Government felt that they must do what they could to stop this man being flogged and they told the Governor that if the appeal was lost then either the Governor or the Home Secretary would reprieve this man immediately, and if it happened in future, there would be a reprieve. No one must be birched in the Isle of Man.

**Mr Doyle:** So you had a discussion with Governor Cecil -

**Mr Irving:** Well, we just sat there and waited to see what the result would be and of course we heard by a phone call that the appeal had been upheld and so the problem didn't arise. The Governor told me he had been assured by the Home Office that in future they would ensure that no one was ever birched in the Isle of Man.

**Mr Doyle:** Was there a question of the Governor or the Home Office trying to interfere with the Judge of Appeal in his decision, was there?

**Mr Irving:** Oh no, no, no. I don't think they'd do that. No, no. When the court had decided, obviously the Governor was ready that this man should be reprieved and that it would be the policy in the future. It would always happen. It is still Manx law, you see, that a Deemster, I think it is now, can award the birch. Now I feel that that isn't right that we should still keep that on the statute book if it cannot go through, it would never be carried out and because it is contrary to our international obligations.

**Mr Doyle:** Just on CBEs and matters of that nature. When you were Chairman of the Executive Council did you put forward lists to the UK on this, or how would it be dealt with?

**Mr Irving:** Well, there was a small, I think it was called the Honours Committee, I don't know what they do nowadays, and this Honours Committee... This is for honours put forward by the Manx

Government, if you like, or by the Lieutenant-Governor. It would not apply to any honours to be awarded for services to a particular charity or something like that, in other words if it were, say, the Royal National Lifeboat it would be dealt with by the Isle of Man and put up to the Ministry of Transport, I think, in the UK and people like the Red Cross would do their own too, and this committee consisted of the Lieutenant-Governor, I think it's the Lieutenant-Governor, the Speaker of the House of Keys, the First Deemster, dare I add, the Chairman of Executive Council. (Laughing)

**Mr Doyle:** So you were on that. Another committee or one of the 16, was it?

**Mr Irving:** I was at the time. I had nothing to do with it and said quite clearly I didn't think I deserved anything. I didn't know what it would be. I didn't think, even if it did go through, it would be as good as a CBE. I thought I might get an MBE.

**Mr Doyle:** I'm still fairly interested in the relationship between the Chairman of Executive Council and the Lieutenant-Governor on the Island during your time. Were you conscious of the Governor having an input into policy decisions?

**Mr Irving:** No. Oh, er, yes, if it was before Governor Cecil came when we had Governor Paul then the Governor still had a lot of powers and duties in those days. Enormous powers of patronage, too, which were transferred, I believe, to the Chief Minister.

**Mr Doyle:** You see, on the birching point. You spoke before of your efforts in connection with Representation of the People. The birching point you've lived with for many years and there have been many debates on that and indeed fairly recently, certainly over the last few years, when the Criminal Justice (Penalties) Bill was before the Legislative Council, and you were sitting in the Legislative Council, you had some strong views on that still, did you?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, you see, it all started with me many years ago in the House of Keys. I read a report by the Howard League for Penal Reform and I thought a lot of the figures for crime. It didn't seem to work terribly well because the number of people who have had it more than once - I mean, don't forget we've had people say here, 'Oh, they don't have it more than once.' - we had a fellow here in my day who'd had it eight times. Now I could make a better case for the cat-o-nine-tails than the birch frankly. I'd go out and make a case for it if, if it's to be effective as it were. I have, for television perhaps, twice made a birch to show them, yes, from birch sticks, complying very strictly with the maximum length, weight, length of handle and number of pieces of birch sticks number, and so on. I got the cane when I was at school and I suppose it was a deterrent in some respects. I would like to see it applied at school now of course, but I felt birching was an entirely different thing because with the cane you had almost immediate reconciliation between the person applying it and the person receiving it. I had a great admiration for a master at the High School, Mr Shimmin who gave me the cane, many times. I thought he was great and I thought I deserved them.

**Mr Doyle:** And what sort of offences would you have to commit before the cane?

**Mr Irving:** Well, it varied. I can't remember or I would say what they were, but I know when the birch first came up, very soon after I'd been in the Keys and I stood up and I spoke for an hour against the birch and all my friends said, 'You fool.' You know.

**Mr Doyle:** Did you know Angela Kneale, the great birch campaigner?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, Angela Kneale. She died quite recently.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, indeed.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, and there we are. Life would have been much easier for me and might have got a few more votes too if I'd said, 'Flog them, flog them, flog them.' But once it had been decided by the International Court, I thought, well now we've got to say that's the end of it. One can't expect to win every case in court, right?

**Mr Doyle:** No, quite.

**Mr Doyle:** Today, Mr Irving, we are hoping to cover the years from 1981 to 1986 and dealing briefly with 1981, and my notes tell me that was the only time you've been unsuccessful standing for

the House of Keys. Do you know why you were unsuccessful in 1981?

**Mr Irving:** I'm sure every unsuccessful candidate has good reasons in his mind why he was unfairly rejected, shall we say! But, I just guess that the people of West Douglas had who they considered two good members and I was moving around, North, West, East Douglas and then I was moving back to West. It might have had some effect but the simple answer is, they didn't want me, and I accept that.

**Mr Doyle:** Who were the two other members?

**Mr Irving:** The two other members were Victor Kneale and Betty Hanson. Now after losing an election a lot of people get very upset indeed. I didn't. I don't know why. I didn't mind a bit.

**Mr Doyle:** Giving more time to devote to the business.

**Mr Irving:** Well, it wasn't just the business, it was I was so tied up in so many things when I was Chairman of the Executive Council at the time, but I was still on the Industry Board, it was called the Industry Board then, the Chairman of the Tourist Board, Chairman of the Sports Council, and goodness knows how many other committees and so on, and it was a relief. So that after a while, I must say, if I may just add this, at the time I suppose I was a bit disappointed but I wasn't heartbroken by any means. I was relieved I felt. I felt relief.

**Mr Doyle:** Was your election team, I think George Carter was your agent, were they very disappointed with the result?

**Mr Irving:** I don't know. I really don't know. I suppose they were. I must confess too that he'd been busy. He was disappointed before the election, you know, wasn't starting in the field earlier by canvassing and anything like that, but it wasn't big-headedness, it was sheer laziness because I am a lazy person!

**Mr Doyle:** Do you think it is important for election candidates to go knocking on the door and seeing the voters directly? Do you think that is important?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, I think so. It's no good asking other people to go for you. No, I think the candidate's got to show his face. But we've talked about this earlier and I've expressed then how I hated canvassing, knocking on the doors and talking to people about it. I'm a very shy person, you know.

**Mr Doyle:** I'm not going to comment on that one, Mr Irving. But -

**Mr Irving:** You have, earlier! (Laughs)

**Mr Doyle:** I have indeed. Modesty, modesty, certainly.

**Mr Irving:** No.

**Mr Doyle:** In 1982 and '83 then you were able to devote a lot more time to the business?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, and I was being fairer to my partner.

**Mr Doyle:** And in 1984 you stood in West Douglas and you were re-elected to the House of Keys?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I was re-elected in a by-election called because of the sad death of Brian Gelling who had been a member for West Douglas for only two years at the time. I think it was 1982 he was elected in a by-election.

**Mr Doyle:** And what were you doing after the election in 1984? What were the main events, the main responsibilities?

**Mr Irving:** Well, you see, I wasn't elected until December in 1984, so I wasn't involved. But it was in '84 that I retired from Irvings Limited, my family business, but in the period '85-'86 I did acquire some other business interests. I was invited to become Chairman of the Bank of Wales (Isle of Man) Limited and of Etam (Isle of Man) Limited, a new business in Douglas

which was ladies clothing. I'd shown interest when they spoke to me about a new venture. Some accountants had spoken to me about a new venture which I thought was in the industry, manufacturing perhaps, of ladies dresswear. So, anyway, later the Bank of Wales was taken over by the Bank of Scotland, where I was chairman for a period.

**Mr Doyle:** Can I just go back to the Etam, the retail directorship which must have been interesting for you. There's been a lot of coverage lately in, well, in February 1997, over some of the big superstores, the Boots, the Marks & Spencers, the Etams, from across coming over to the Island and the effect that they have on the small retailer, say, in Ramsey, or in Peel. Have you any views on that? The way it's changing perhaps not the quality of life, but the way that people shop in the Isle of Man is totally different to 20 years ago?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I'm sure it is changing and I don't like it because I was a small shopkeeper myself and it's very sad, but in many cases I think, certainly in the case of food, it is making them much cheaper for the local people, and in the case of people like Marks & Spencer and now Boots, this does give a bigger variety but it is very sad for the small shopkeepers, like me. I don't think we could stop it.

**Mr Doyle:** No, it gives the consumer a great choice.

**Mr Irving:** It gives them a much better choice but it's unfortunate for a lot of people.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. So that was in 1985 and '86?

**Mr Irving:** No, that was in '84.

**Mr Doyle:** Eighty-four, sorry, yes. But in 1985 were you involved with the Harbour Board?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I was. When I was re-elected in December '84, the one board I would like to have been on was the Harbour Board and soon afterwards, in 1985, I was elected chairman of the board which pleased me greatly. There were, I think, two or three events I'd like to mention in connection with the Harbour Board. Now, if I say '85, it could well have been '86 or vice versa but it was during this period. There were three events which I recall fairly well. First of all the board was asked to approve the establishment of a shipping line between Ramsey Harbour and Liverpool but there were difficulties because the east quay in Ramsey was in poor condition. It was really quite unfit for large containers and a very large and heavy crane to deal with them, so the board refused to rebuild the east quay at the time. I'll explain why later. Well, we had much more urgent work we had to carry out in Douglas. For that I was criticised very severely in Tynwald and elsewhere. Lots of people in the Ramsey area were furious with us, that the Harbour Board, you know, were not prepared to help Ramsey and the north in this connection and there was great criticism in the press. I remember three words in the press referring to the Harbour Board and the chairman in particular, and they were 'duplicitous', 'deviousness' and 'pig-headedness'. I remember well a meeting called in Ramsey on this subject, 400 people attended this meeting. We three members of the Harbour Board were there with some officials, I was fortunate of course to have two first-class colleagues, Eddie Lowey, member for Rushen, and Bernie May, member for North Douglas. We had a very stormy meeting but surprisingly we enjoyed it. The reasons we couldn't consider doing anything at the time for the east quay in Ramsey was because we were faced with a much more important and very urgent job in Douglas Harbour. At that time petrol and gas tankers discharged their cargoes at an ancient wooden cattle stage at the breakwater, very close, too, to the large storage tanks we had there for petrol and gas. It was, I believe, a very dangerous situation. We had two or three incidents there or, if you like, small accidents in discharging petrol and these made us extremely concerned about the safety of the area, indeed the safety of the town of Douglas when one considers that was the main area of population. The work on the breakwater, to allow modern, safe, discharging was expected to cost £774,000. We were later delighted to find that Shell were prepared to pay £350,000 towards it. Once we got the new discharging berth at the breakwater we carried on with Ramsey quay. Everything returned to quiet after that but it had caused an enormous fuss when we said we wouldn't do anything about the east quay, but I think most people would agree that this customer safety on Douglas breakwater was much more urgent, much more important and we hadn't got the money then anyway.

**Mr Doyle:** Was there a feeling in Ramsey that the MHKs were putting Douglas first and foremost, above the outlying areas?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, yes, I think there was, that we were looking after Douglas. On the other hand, you see, Eddie Lowey was the Rushen MHK. Oh Bernie May of course was North Douglas, yes. So it all finished well. In the end, I think it was Allan Bell, the member for Ramsey, proposed in Tynwald that money should be made available to do the east quay and to everybody's surprise I seconded the motion. So everyone was satisfied all around. It was good to be a member of the board at that time because the third point I'd like to mention is when the Manx Shipping Register was going so well, though I cannot claim any worthwhile contribution to its success. Most of the important work had been done by Howard Simcocks, the member for Rushen, and Roy McDonald, member for Peel. Then in 1986 we decided to launch the Manx International Shipping Register in London. We had a big meeting there, 85 representatives, ship owners and managers, insurers, and so on, attended from as far abroad as Canada and Hong Kong. Calls for our register continued after the launch, not always due to the launch of course but it helped quite a lot. Shell moved its entire fleet of 27 very large ships to the register which increased our registered tonnage from 273,000 tonnes to two million tonnes. This meant that the United Kingdom register lost a quarter of their total tonnage. A quarter of the merchant navy was lost to the United Kingdom and registered in the Isle of Man. We also got the Canadian Pacific fleet of 12 tankers. So the register was going well and it is great credit to Simcocks and MacDonald and people like that.

**Mr Doyle:** And was the nationalisation of the Steam Packet, was that debate continuing at this time?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, it was proposed that the Steam Packet Company be nationalised. I mean, many people had mentioned this and I think someone proposed in Tynwald that it ought to be and Tynwald agreed to a committee to investigate the question and I was chairman of the committee and my two colleagues whom I mentioned from the Harbour Board were the rest of the committee, so it really was a Harbour Board Committee. We received a great deal of evidence and we made great investigations and after a lot of consideration we reported against the proposal. Tynwald accepted our report by a very large majority. There was very little support for nationalisation, in fact, I think it was only four members who rejected the report in the end.

**Mr Doyle:** Was Mr Quine one of those?

**Mr Irving:** I can't remember. I remember Mr Speaker was one. He said it's bound to happen in the next two years.

**Mr Doyle:** And during this period in the 1980s, were you making any visits on the Commonwealth Parliamentary side? Some visits on that?

**Mr Irving:** Well, in 1985, 30 years after entering the Keys I attended my first Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Cyprus and in the following year in Gibraltar. I hadn't put my name down for conferences in the past, for I was a partner in a business and fortunately I had a splendid partner in the form of my brother Frank, but I did feel that after all the time taken for boards, committees and meetings, and Keys and Tynwald, I could hardly say I'm going off on a jaunt in the summer to far distant places. So I left it a while, but I did have these two conferences at the time. Most interesting. I suppose I did some things to make it worthwhile but I was never able, certainly before I left the firm, to say I'm going off on a conference or I'm flying to one.

**Mr Doyle:** Do you think being an active member of the Commonwealth has assisted the Isle of Man over the years?

**Mr Irving:** Assisted the Isle of Man generally? I suppose it has. You've given me the question at very short notice that if I had time to consider it I might be able to mention ways in which it has. But then, you see, if you're a member of the Commonwealth and known to play a part in it and meet other people in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, particularly in the UK. The ones I went to were regional. There is a really big conference

somewhere in the world annually and then there are also regional conferences and the Isle of Man still of course takes part in the regional conference which include the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Gibraltar, Cyprus and now Malta, each of these islands send a delegate to it, so it's very much a regional conference. Oh, by the way, I think I ought to mention something very brave which Mr Speaker had done in this connection. He was Vice-President of the entire Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and he proposed that the world conference should be held in the Isle of Man in 1984.

**Mr Doyle:** Is this when Sir Charles Kerruish was Speaker? Is that when you refer to Mr Speaker there?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, I'm sorry, I didn't mention Sir Charles proposed that the conference be held in the Isle of Man. It was held and it was a great success and the Isle of Man is by far the tiniest part of the Commonwealth who have ever had the big annual conference. The Queen was unable to come but the Queen Mother came.

**Mr Doyle:** Were there any other matters happening in this period, 1981 - 1986, that you think are worthy of mention?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I'm mentioning certain matters, I wouldn't like anybody, whoever reads this or hears it in the future, to think is that all they did in Tynwald, in the Keys and the Legislative Council during those years. I have missed out many, many important things and I've sort of talked about things, on instructions of course, -

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** Things which I was involved in particularly and of particular interest to me. But the normal life of government still went on with masses of laws being made and great debates in Tynwald and so on.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and you thoroughly enjoyed all the aspects of that?

**Mr Irving:** I enjoyed my political time, yes, very much.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, because you give me the impression, when you talked about that meeting in Ramsey when the 400 people turned up, a lot of people would have gone to that meeting if they were representing the Harbour Board with a certain amount of intrepidation and a certain amount of fear but you give me the impression that you thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Mr Irving:** Well, yes, we had decided on something we knew would be unpopular but we'd decided this is it. We felt we had an excellent case for saying the safety of the people in Douglas, if you like, depended on us doing something to prevent a terrible explosion in that area.

**Mr Doyle:** But there was a lot of barracking at the meeting and certain personal comment that you -

**Mr Irving:** Oh, at the meeting, yes, oh yes, yes. There were a lot of outspoken comments at that meeting but it was a great meeting and I, it shows what a crazy, mixed-up person I am, I admired these people for the way they were all fighting to get this new steamship line going from Ramsey. I didn't mind whether they said I was pig-headed or, my colleagues I don't think worried very much. It's all part of the game, isn't it?

**Mr Doyle:** It's part of politics.

**Mr Doyle:** Mr Irving, we are up to 1987 now. I think you left the Keys in 1986 and then you were elected to that body known as the Legislative Council, a body that you had, I think, the constitution of which you had in the past quite heavily criticised.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was one of the main points in our constitutional reform that went on for many years. We were concerned for two main reasons. Firstly, we thought their powers were too great and we were a bit... we were very worried actually about the power over the Keys and how they could veto the Keys legislation and also the veto, in a way, votes of the Keys in

Tynwald Court. But when I joined them of course it had been reduced to delay, so I was quite happy to join the Council. As for the composition, the composition of the Council when I joined was ten members, eight elected by the Keys and the Lord Bishop and the Attorney-General. The Lord Bishop had a vote but the Attorney-General did not have, so the Keys had some influence on the membership of the Legislative Council. Before that of course, if one goes back to the early days, it was the old formation of a Legislative Council in the Isle of Man with the old colonial office policy of creating Legislative Councils in the colonies and filling them with people who owed their jobs to Whitehall. Now we felt that the composition, when we started our constitutional reform, was the Council was composed almost entirely by people who owed their jobs to Whitehall or had been nominated, or appointed rather, by the Lieutenant-Governor. Now the situation was much better when I got there and I was quite happy to be in the Council. We sat at a horseshoe shaped table with the Governor in the Chair and conducted the business in a much less formal manner than we had in the House of Keys and moreover, since we were continually going into committee to deal with legislation, then one had the opportunity of contributing more than once to these various matters. I must say, the point is, a Legislative Council really deals with the passage of legislation as, certainly in theory, so does the House of Keys in administrative matters, financial matters, and many policy matters are dealt with in the joint sittings of both the Council and the Keys in Tynwald.

**Mr Doyle:** On the election to the Legislative Council, were you approached by the Chief Minister or... How did you learn that you were being nominated as a proposed -

**Mr Irving:** Nominated, yes... You're not going to suggest, I hope, that I asked, that I indicated to someone that I would like to be a member?

**Mr Doyle:** Not at all. I'm just interested in knowing where the proposal came from.

**Mr Irving:** Well, of course I did. As one interested in politics it's very difficult to give it up, you see, and I thought this would be something I could do. It was only for a period of two years and that helped in view of my age that members felt, oh well, we'll give him a go. It was a very closely contested election when I got there. They say it was a bit of a cliffhanger which was probably appropriate. I was proposed by a Member of the House of Keys and seconded by Member of the House of Keys and that was it. It was nothing at all to do with the Governor.

**Mr Doyle:** And the role that you played in the Legislative Council in connection with the various Bills that came up for consideration, were there any particular principles that you were interested in your time in the Council?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, there were. I had one of my, I suppose you'd call it, phases where I felt that one of the main duties of a politician was to safeguard the liberty of the people and one sees, as time goes on, an Englishman's home isn't always his castle nowadays, and there is obviously from time to time it is necessary to reduce their liberty a bit. But one Bill in particular that came forward, it was called the Bees Bill, which dealt with matters to prevent disease from abroad affecting Manx bees and in this Bill it said that if an official from the Department of Agriculture felt that someone's building, including a residence, might be harbouring something which would spread disease amongst Manx bees, then he could ask to be allowed in to search the premises. If the occupier, in the case of a house, said no, he gave 24 hours' notice that he would be coming to search the house. It was very kind of him to give 24 hours' notice, it gives one plenty of time to dispose of things, doesn't it? Now I felt that this was quite wrong and I fought to get it changed that someone searching the house, except in very extreme circumstances, must have a warrant given by a Justice of the Peace. This is the same as agreed and I think there were two, or perhaps three, occasions when I tried the same thing. It was just that I felt at the time that it was time we did something about this.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, and after your initial two years expired, I think you were re-elected then for the full period of five years?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, another cliffhanger election, I think. When I left, the day I left Tynwald, you know, in the last few minutes of the sitting, talking to the members, as it were, in Tynwald, I said

how much I enjoyed their friendship and so on and I liked them all but I said, I did feel that it wasn't entirely reciprocated in the two elections to the Legislative Council. But I said it was very kind of them because they were obviously worried about my age and the enormous amount of work and pressure and stress that one suffered through being in the Legislative Council! Of course it's quite the opposite really but there we are. Anyway I was re-elected so I was very pleased indeed.

**Mr Doyle:** And one of the main issues then was the territorial sea, the 12-mile limit. Was that a major issue then?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, for a very long time there had been requests, or demands if you like, to the United Kingdom Government that we wanted our 12-mile territorial sea. We now were being offered that. In the deal we would get mineral rights under the sea of course, with the exception of coal which was earmarked for the National Coal Board. We weren't interested in the coal anyway, but for a payment of £800,000 we were getting right to any minerals and of course we had the right to any hydrocarbons, any oil or gas, in these waters. So up to then it was a good arrangement but we were told that any byelaws made for the new area of sea we were getting as territorial water had to be approved by the Home Secretary. Now we've had for a long time laws having to be approved with Royal Assent and I think that Royal Assent means the Home Secretary in many ways, or the Home Office, which is why I asked the Queen to give the Royal Assent, or the Governor who has the right nowadays, and considering our behaviour over certain international obligations I had the feeling, it's still there, that the Home Office doesn't trust us entirely. I don't blame them.

**Mr Doyle:** Is this on the basis of the birching and the homosexual points?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was our attitude towards the birching. Of course a lot of people were in favour. Most people in the Island, I'm sure, wanted to keep the birch. But then if it is contrary to our international obligations and I would have thought in a territory or a country, if you like, that relies so much on the finance sector with its obligations to people, that we would want to give a general impression that we were the sort of people who would keep our word and who accept decisions that we said we would.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. I remember actually being in the public area of the Legislative Council on a number of occasions when you were pressing this important point of international obligations and the Attorney-General was supporting you as well and I don't think its importance can be underestimated.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I was very disappointed at the way the people had said, oh, we're not going to give this up. Why should this Court of Human Rights tell us what to do. I suppose the same people could say, why should any court of law tell us what to do? But we did ask in the early '50s to have it applied to the Island. In fact, in the '90s, I forget which year it was now, we asked the Court of Human Rights to extend the right to appeal to individuals -

**Mr Doyle:** Individual petition.

**Mr Irving:** In the Isle of Man so that we accepted the obligation. Now, Jersey had the same trouble, every small community would have the same trouble, Guernsey, and so on, because people wanted to keep the birch, shall we say, they wanted severe punishment like that, or what they believed to be severe punishment, and the Jersey statement at the end was, they said, 'It is vitally important that this Island should be recognised in the international community as a territory which is prepared and responsible enough to meet its international obligations', adding 'even if this does arouse some public indignation at the time.' Now in the case of birching, it certainly did. In 1991 of course, on this subject of international obligations, the Court of Human Rights decided that certain homosexual acts should not be regarded as criminal in private, carried out in private. We were told by the United Kingdom that we had to comply with this decision as it is their job to ensure we do and the United Kingdom Government even said, as time went on, if you do not amend your law, we will make a law applying it to the Isle of Man. Now we were at the time in the Legislative Council advised by the Attorney-General, we were warned about this, how serious a matter it was in the question of international agreements. The then Attorney-

General did not take part in political arguments, as it were, but pointed out that this was our international obligation and that if we didn't do it, it was understood the United Kingdom would do it. Now a vote was then taken in the Council and out of nine people voting, that is the eight Keys members and the Bishop, the vote was 5 to 4 against the ruling of the Court of Human Rights and the request of the United Kingdom, and the threat indeed of the United Kingdom, and I was very surprised. Now I can understand a certain degree of reluctance in the House of Keys because members are getting a lot of pressure from their electors that this must not happen, we must always have it as a criminal offence. So I was surprised that the Council were prepared to risk this showdown with the United Kingdom, damage any good name we had for honouring our agreement, and not realising that if we didn't do it, it would be done for us and that would be the sort of precedent we would not like at any time, that the United Kingdom started passing domestic legislation for the Isle of Man.

**Mr Doyle:** That covers the international obligations point, I think. Now, if we move to 1992, I think. There was the Scottish Power Report. That was one of the issues you had to deal with, is that correct?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, Scottish Power. Before I go on to the Scottish Power, may I just conclude in the other point by saying, in the year 1992 we sought the right of individual petition to the Court of Human Rights. Some people always said, well, it's all very well if government were trying, would they apply, you see, if they were doing the wrong thing? It should be individual and we agreed and such was the feeling about this that in Tynwald only two people were against it, one in the Keys and one in the Council. Now after all the complaints we hear about the Court of Human Rights, I felt that was quite a remarkable vote, only two, out of 34, opposing it. Yes, in that year, now we had the question... We had an offer from the Scottish Power Company who generate electricity in Scotland that they would take over the Manx Electricity Authority. It wasn't a good deal at all and I'd better point out first of all, a committee was appointed to go into this and I was elected as chairman of the committee. I found this most interesting. I'm sure there is always a demand or a wish in the Isle of Man that we had a cable from somewhere, at no cost to us, bringing us cheap electricity but in this case it was two cables which was probably even better. There were many reasons why we couldn't accept this offer, one was an absolute minimum of a hundred jobs would go in the MEA, government would lose millions of pounds in revenue and it's all very well saying with two cables then if one goes out you've got the other one, but these cables which start, I think, in Scotland and brought down to the coast north of the Island, 20 miles overland by overhead cables, when the cable reached the Isle of Man, near the Point of Ayre, there was another 20 miles of overhead cables, so it wasn't as secure as one might think, with an undersea cable from door to door, and Scottish Power were not interested in taking over the existing generating machinery and said, in the event... they would take it over for free of course, but in the event of any trouble with the cable or the overhead lines they would have to acquire some stand-by equipment, they were very eager for that, and we decided that we had to be like Jersey where they get electricity by cable from France, most of it being nuclear powered, but they still keep their own generation equipment standing by there and we thought we would agree to exactly the same. But, you see, when one considers the loss in government revenue, if we want cheap electricity in the Isle of Man, rather than accept the Scottish Power deal, let government subsidise our electricity and it still wouldn't lose them as much as Scottish Power taking over. There were quite a few considerations. We in the committee invited submissions from people on whether they thought it was a good idea or not, they wouldn't know all the details anyway, and we had, I think, 80 people wrote to us about it and very few said we ought to take it. In the end we said we didn't want to continue the negotiations on the basis they'd put to us. It wasn't a good deal for the Island.

**Mr Doyle:** And on an entirely different subject, the interest that you had as a politician in the advancement of sporting facilities in the Isle of Man, that was also, I think, receiving attention in these years.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, well, the same year as Scottish Power. Phase 1 of the big National Sports Centre plan near the Quarterbridge and the Castletown Road in Douglas was approved and this was a very big step forward and what has happened there since is to me beyond the wildest dreams of those of us who wanted to get going on providing good sporting facilities in the

Island and of course that was just phase 1 we were talking about then, but now, in phase 2, we have the big swimming pool and so on. That was one very good thing in that year, I think.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. In 1993, or in those years, what were your main areas of political responsibility?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I was politically responsible, if you like, for arranging for the, let's say, exploration for and extraction of oil and gas, hydrocarbons, found in Manx waters. Though I say political responsibility, I really must say that though I was featured in this I had the responsibility, but a very efficient civil servant, a Mrs Jeanette Williams, had the work and the brains too.

**Mr Doyle:** It's a very complex area.

**Mr Irving:** I don't deserve a lot of the credit but people like her do and I will also say who else deserves a lot of credit in this connection - I hope someday we are going to find something by the way - and that is Department of Trade and Industry in the United Kingdom, the head of which for licensing in all British waters, UK waters rather, and ashore, even on the land, all licensing arrangements, the head of the department was a Mr John Brooks who helped us enormously. He has, I believe, 12 geophysicists and geologists in his department and he said on certain information which we needed on the early surveys by us of the Manx territorial sea, we had been quoted £400,000 by our consultant to do the job. This department, this Mr Brooks in England got his people onto it and saved us £400,000 in one go. It wasn't just that, he helped us all the way through, information on how they did it there in England, advice all the time, he was on the phone to us. They really were, and when we talk about the defence contribution, it really is the defence and common services contribution. The provision of this sort of common services we tend to forget and just take it as something for defence.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, because, you talk about common services there, I think in the following year one of the major debates was the Common Purse arrangement.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, yes, that's right. May I, just before we... I will mention the Common Purse, shall we?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** We had what is called a licensing round and invited oil and gas people to apply to rent part of our sea, where they paid, was it £450 for each square kilometre, that sort of thing, and we charged for licences too, to survey and we got quite a lot of money out of that, too, towards our £800,000 for the mineral rights. Not a lot of people took us up at the end but I think we've got four companies involved. The greatest interest at the moment is up around the Point of Ayre which is bordering on the Morecombe Bay field. Great interest has been for a few years now on the Solway Firth and there has been drilling. No company will ever tell you what they found in the end but, you know, to drill one hole, one drilling, I think it's £100,000 a day in rent for the drill, it could cost, I would say, it wouldn't surprise me if someone said it cost us £3 million to drill that one off Douglas, or something like that. It literally cost millions to do this and they're certainly not going to tell anybody what they've found. It may be that nothing will be found but if they do find economic quantities of oil or gas then it could mean quite a lot of money for the Island. I must say that we were very, very careful in protecting the environment. You would hardly credit the amount of paper they've got on what they can't do and what they can do in their operations. One would wonder why anybody would take it on, knowing that they mustn't do this, they mustn't do that, they mustn't even flare at any moment without giving notice that they're going to. You know what I mean when they set alight to anything. They mustn't interfere with the fishing, there are all sorts of things and we've been very strict about it.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. Were you also concerned about any social consequences if they did strike oil off the Point of Ayre? It wasn't a problem?

**Mr Irving:** No, some people thought, oh, we're going to be another Aberdeen or something like that, or Lerwick in the Shetlands. No, I don't think it would be like that. You see, I think any gas

or oil, unless it was a very big find, would be taken away in tankers and I don't think so. And their bases, they already have bases in the UK, very close, so they're hardly likely to set up a new base in the Isle of Man, but all of them were told... We told them all that anybody who got a licence, we would expect them to use the Isle of Man resources to the maximum but I don't think it would change things now.

**Mr Doyle:** It's the ideal position of having the potential for having the money but not having a base or a real presence.

**Mr Irving:** Yes. You see, if you take the case of the Shetland Islands, they've got Sullom Voe, which is an inlet there, as their main base there because that's relatively a long way from their UK bases but here they wouldn't be. You see they've bases serving the Morecombe Bay field and now the Solway Firth area, so I don't think it would produce a lot of money for the government which I hope would not be chucked into general revenue and spent quickly but rather like the Shetlands where they have put it on Trust to be used in the future.

**Mr Doyle:** A reserve?

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Could we move now to the Common Purse debate and the developments there?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, in the next year, that would be 1994, we had one of those big debates on the Common Purse arrangement which we had from time to time and I don't know if I mentioned this before but so often people are saying to me, why can't we have the same constitutional provision as Jersey and then they say, you see, we're tired with this Common Purse thing which the United Kingdom Government want us to have and I always have to say, well look, it's a purely voluntary thing. We give several months' notice, you can forget any Common Purse and we do it as long as we feel that it's in the interests of the Isle of Man and I'm not going to start talking now in terms of why it is so important to the Island because without saying that there are people in the Isle of Man who don't agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. But anyway, we had this big, long debate about it and it was decided to retain the Common Purse agreement. But life's a bit easier if people realise it's a purely voluntary thing -

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, that was your point.

**Mr Irving:** And we can get out at a few month's notice.

**Mr Doyle:** Six months notice.

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** And in 1995, the following year, you retired from the Legislative Council. That's right?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, it was the end of my term in February 1995. Now, I was sad to go but I was getting to an age where I would find it extremely hard to justify saying, 'I'll have another five years.' I don't think I'd have got it anyway, but I retired and I found it a wonderful experience and, as I said before, I was so delighted that it had changed so much and... It's a pity that a lot of people who've accused us in the past of wasting time on constitutional reform, will never appreciate the changes and what it meant to them, and I had, at the last sitting in Tynwald, I had pleasure in supporting the building of the big Heritage Centre in Peel and I made one of the worst speeches I've ever made in Tynwald I think, I dunno, maybe I was too excited. I know that I said that the opposition to this Heritage Centre was pathetic, everybody seemed to laugh, then I said something as big as this, some massive project deserved a damn sight better opposition than it had had in Tynwald that day, so I wasn't very good at my last sitting, but I was pleased to be able to support this because what was obvious to me was, it was going somewhere on the Island and I thought Peel was a good sight for it. Nothing of course to do with the fact that I was born in Peel and lived in Peel! No, no, I've always tried to take the view, it's got to be in the interests of the Isle of Man, not just one's constituency.

**Mr Doyle:** It's an interesting point because you'll see many politicians putting the interests of their area,

their constituency, perhaps, some would say, before the general interests of the Isle of Man as a whole. What do you see as the role of a politician in that respect?

**Mr Irving:** I think I mentioned earlier that I read Burke the English constitutional writer, usually on this sort of question and the real thing to me, and I've tried to do this, is, is it in the interests of the Isle of Man? Now I could never put something forward for my constituency which I didn't believe was in the interests of the Isle of Man. Of course certain things, certain public services, if you like in connection with public services, really it isn't a question on the good of the Island, they are just, shall we say, almost essential things that have to be produced in certain places. But I suppose, let's be fair and say that a lot of people who give the appearance of just going for their constituency also believe that it is in the interests of the Island as a whole.

**Mr Doyle:** We've covered an awful lot of matters in quite a short space of time, Mr Irving, and we've probably missed an awful lot as well but I think what would be of great interest would be if you have any memories of how the House of Keys was in the—it would be about 1955 when you were initially involved with the House of Keys. Do you have any memories of the House of Keys as it was?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, certainly it has changed considerably. Certainly the facilities for members have changed and of course I believe the type of members have changed. The age is much lower now than it appeared to be to me in 1955. When I entered the House and I saw the members sat there, and looking at them I thought they were much older than I expected and obviously, I thought, either retired or certainly not in full-time employment. Now I could understand this for I was soon elected to three boards of Tynwald which, together with membership of odd committees, took a great deal more time than the ordinary meetings, the regular meetings of the Keys or Tynwald and as time went on it certainly was... to be a Member of the House of Keys was accepting a full-time job. The pay, which was always referred to as expenses, was £150 a year when I started. Soon afterwards it was increased to £200. So in 1962, when there was a general election coming, though I hadn't lost any enthusiasm for politics, I just couldn't afford to stand in the general election but I had to spend more time in my business in which I was a partner and the expenses, or pay, wasn't really enough to pay someone else to stand in for me. The opportunity for standing for the House of Keys in those days was limited to a very small part of our population. At that time we had a Hansard, that is the report of the proceedings in the House, and at that time they were produced using short-hand note-takers who sat in the press gallery. They were of course journalists. I remember one short-hand writer would rap on the rail of the press gallery with his pencil to indicate that the member who was speaking was going too fast. For many years the chief writer was a Mr Philip Cain who was an eminent journalist and it really was a great deal of time, many years, that he spent doing this job and everybody thought he did it very fairly and efficiently. Members were provided with a proof report of the proceedings but this tended to result in members rewriting their speeches, you see, and in 1961 microphones were installed in the chambers so that the proceedings could be recorded on tape. Reports in the local press in those days were very full. The Isle of Man Times, for example, in particular, would regularly devote a whole page of a broadsheet to a single debate. There were not in those days, as presently, the splendid Tynwald Library which is now there for the use of members and with its research facilities and there are even typing facilities in the members' room for members nowadays. The Secretary of the House and also at that time called Secretary of Tynwald, was not then a full-time appointment. It was held by a practising advocate Mr Frank Johnson, who gave great service to the Manx legislature in that particular post for 26 years. However, in 1964 Mr Eddie Kermeen, T E Kermeen, senior civil servant, became full-time Clerk to Tynwald, as the title was, and Secretary to the House of Keys. He incidentally retired in 1976 and was elected as Member of the House of Keys for West Douglas. But times have changed greatly. Another thing that struck me when I entered the Keys and when I compare it with nowadays, there seemed to be a very general impression amongst members, the less they did and said the more likely they were to be re-elected but I don't think that applies nowadays.

**Mr Doyle:** Times have changed.

**Mr Irving:** There is more fighting spirit in the chambers in the Manx legislature nowadays than there was

then.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, were there many questions tabled in the '50s?

**Mr Irving:** No, questions weren't as popular in those days and members didn't feel that it got them excellent publicity to ask these questions which, as you must know, one doesn't ask questions in Tynwald or the Keys or the Council unless you know the answer, but now it's used a lot, Question Time, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** So we've dealt there with the changes briefly in the Keys. Can I now turn to a general topic. In my researches it's plain that you've been, you'd say involved, I'd say influential, but your modesty wouldn't permit you to take credit for them all, but some very important developments in the Isle of Man, political developments and important matters. In your own mind can you list the important matters in either order of priority, or... What do you think are the most important matters you've been involved in during your political career?

**Mr Irving:** Now I'm not going to say that I did these things, but they were matters in which I was particularly interested and involved, to a certain extent, but I suppose the first one I think produced a remarkable effect in the Isle of Man was the question of surtax. I really do.

**Mr Doyle:** That was the beginning of the finance industry in effect.

**Mr Irving:** Well, people say so and I suppose it could be. It is, I suppose, yes, but it did establish the Isle of Man as a territory with quite different taxation, shall we say, and favourable taxation in the light of then taxation in the UK. But then that, I suppose, was the one where I think I have seen remarkable... But then, connected with that was the question of constitutional reform which I suppose basically was establishing a separate national identity for the Isle of Man and I think that probably may even have had more effect than surtax, but I thought it was extremely important for the economic life of the Island that we should have greater freedom to create conditions for an Island community here. Of course that leads me to think of the question of international agreements. I have always been very keen on international agreements and I am surprised that more members of Tynwald don't take them more seriously.

**Mr Doyle:** At the end of the last tape we were dealing with the importance of complying with international obligations. That's where we left the last side of the tape.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, well, I think it ought to be understood by people that the government are invited or asked if they wish to be party to many of these international agreements in which the United Kingdom is involved and we are asked whether we want to be or not. It is not forced on us in any way, and I think every one to which we are connected now, we've asked for it. We certainly haven't been bullied in any way into it. The one of course that interested me very much was the Common Market, and I'm saying the Common Market deliberately and not the European Union because we talked in those days only in terms of trade really and I did, I think it's probably recorded earlier, move in Tynwald that we had a committee, and I was on this committee and I felt that we had to keep out. I think I've covered this pretty well. But I don't know if I did mention at the time that we were told we could either be to the Community, not a member but have a relationship with the Community on free trade, or if we didn't accept that or going into the Community completely then the alternative was complete independence. We've covered that.

**Mr Doyle:** You mentioned it but it is an important point to stress, obviously, but we did cover it briefly.

**Mr Irving:** Yes, and we did feel at the time that whether we wanted complete independence or not, if we got complete independence we would want the sort of terms we were negotiating for in London and I don't think that since that time in the early '70s attitudes have changed towards our relationship.

**Mr Doyle:** And, it like getting blood out of a stone asking you about all the important matters you've been involved in the House of Keys but -

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I would like to say, if you talking about what I was particularly interested in, I was very,

very interested in the development of tourism all the time and over the years I have been on the development of industry, very much so, but both of those, I suppose particularly tourism, it was almost a mania with me at first. It was my one political objective. I'm surprised if my manifesto carried anything else except the promotion of tourism. But though I've mentioned particularly about things I was interested and involved one still has many important things to support and be interested in and to deal with in the Manx legislature. I don't want to pretend that these were the only things that mattered but they were particular things that interested me. We all have our own bees in our bonnets.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, only I think in Who's Who in the Tynwald Companion there are lists of the various boards and the various committees that you were a member of. I mean, there were numerous committees and boards. It would take many days to go through all of that work but one matter which you've conveniently failed to mention and which you were instrumental in is the setting up of the Sports Council.

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes. Haven't we looked at that earlier?

**Mr Doyle:** We did earlier but do you consider that as one of the important developments?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, I think the existence of the Sports Council has done a lot and will do a lot for life in the Isle of Man. I mean, I don't want to prolong the arguments for having a Sports Council and having all these facilities for sport but, though I was there at the kick-off I think they've done a wonderful job. We see evidence of it in the National Sports Centre near the Quarterbridge in Douglas here. But they've done a great deal other than that. That is the visual side that we see and I think it is absolutely splendid. I think that government ought to be proud that it has such excellent facilities for sport and gives such financial support to sport in many ways in sponsoring visits abroad by sports people in the Island, by having coaches over here to coach our people and so on. It is not just the facilities, it's all the other things they've done as well.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, it adds to the quality of life of the residents of the Island and on that topic actually we've dealt with 83 years, I think, a period spanning 83 years. You would have seen on the Island a great change, whether it's for better or for worse, in the quality of life of the people living on the Isle of Man. Have you got anything to say on that topic?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, (Laughing) I suppose I'll have to say something. Yes, I don't think we realise how much the quality of life here affects our economic situation here on the Isle of Man. A lot of people have come here to start businesses, industry, catering, and all sorts of things, because of the quality of life here and it's very important. I always consider there are two important things for the Isle of Man Government, one is the right to decide on our own type of taxation, rates of taxation, and spending the proceeds, being able to decide how to spend the proceeds, but the second is, terribly important, quality of life. I don't know whether it's deteriorated but there are certain things nowadays that makes one think at times that it isn't as good as it was. Now it's very difficult for an old man like me not to talk about the good old days! The good old days are today and tomorrow to me, especially tomorrow! Certain things have changed but there are items, things that come to mind that make me think that these are things that are diminishing the quality of life. Let's say the high cost of travel, now every island community around the United Kingdom, apart from, say, the Isle of Wight which is very close, but the northern islands, the western coast of Scotland islands and so on I've been to these places and heard this and seen the sort of difficulties they have. People living on an island community like to be able to get off now and again, though whether now and again is every year or every ten years, they still want to feel they can get off and people come here to live who, particularly the women, feel it's a bit tough I'm away from my family and my friends and so on and yet it is not easy for inhabitants in British Islands around the United Kingdom to get to what people call the mainland. Now it may well be that it is particularly upsetting when one reads in the paper that one can fly to all parts of the world for the same price as getting to London. Now I know all about the economies of scale, or in the case of islands, the dis-economies of scale, and I'm not blaming Manx Airlines or anything but it does make one think it's terribly expensive to get away. One might argue that, with inflation, one can't expect 1950 prices or '57 prices in '97, or something like that, but even so one forgets about inflation and in a comparative way of course this is very bad, that people living on an island can't get off it

every now and again. There is I believe nowadays, too, less of the feeling of security. We get a lot of people coming here and saying, well, it's so secure here. In fact in the Tourist Board we used to advertise for new residents and that, with pictures of a couple of small children walking along the road and saying they could walk anywhere and that sort of thing. Now I don't believe that everybody's as confident now as they were in those days and of course there has been an increase in crime which I wouldn't like to say the reason why it might happen. Maybe it's our bigger population. There are all sorts of reasons but there is loss of feeling part of the community. I suppose with a smaller population you know more people and more people know you and you feel part of the community but nowadays the population has increased so much that one goes to various functions, shall we say, and you see people and you feel I've never seen all these people before. One thing that we were talking about, travel, the number of people who remark on they get on the plane to London, they don't see the old familiar faces or they don't see familiar faces. But there we are, it's used a lot for business, I know. Some people would claim that social divisions are more prominent nowadays. Those can happen because of a change in the economic life of the Island, the commercial life of the Island, where we have now more people in higher paid jobs than we used to have. Another thing about feeling secure, of not being part of the community, do people still take part with other members of the community on the scale they used to? If you have home entertainment in the form of TV, I think maybe crowds and all sorts of little organisations aren't supported as they used to be because people can find their entertainment at home. We certainly don't have the number of village concerts and things, and choirs don't do as well as they used to, but there we are. Now the decline in tourism, too, affects the quality of life. If as some people claim, which I think is very wrong, that tourism is finished, what tourists, tourism is finished they say. This is a dreadful attitude to take. It isn't finished. It has declined of course but if it's finished does that mean we're going to lose the Manx Electric Railway, would the Gaiety Theatre close without tourists, I don't know. Will the horse trams run, not that I use the horse trams very much, but all sorts of amenities on the Island are there because of the tourist industry and these amenities I believe have declined, not in the major one, because of the absence of tourists to support them during the tourist season. But the final one I would mention, this is without mentioning all the good things that have happened, like the higher standard of living, the better services of government and all those sort of things but you see something that needles a lot of people is the question of motoring on the Island, not just too many cars on the road but when it comes to parking there are too many cars and motoring isn't the pleasure it was on the Island, though it is still a great deal better than many places in the UK. I know of people who say that they moved to Douglas from Peel because it takes them, in the morning, half an hour and has been as much as three quarters of an hour to get across the Quarterbridge. Now that's all very well but when one looks at television in the morning with the traffic moving into Manchester and London and so on, and all round in towns in the UK, makes Manx people feel that they're not very badly off but I think there has been some slight deterioration.

**Mr Doyle:** I'm thinking of the people who have been influential in your life and who've been supportive and the people that come to my mind, and I may be wrong or I may be right, but your wife and your brother would be two prime candidates in that category wouldn't they?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, yes. Yes, I must say I couldn't have spent so much time in politics. I certainly, what was I in Tynwald for, 30 odd years, I am now trying to make up for 30 odd years neglect of my house, my garden and probably my family too. My wife's been absolutely splendid about it all the way through. She's encouraged me, she's put up with... I recall, for example, when I was Chairman of the Tourist Board, late nights or out with visiting people and so on and she's been most tolerant, most supportive, most encouraging to me and I have a lot of respect for her, I don't think anybody else would have put up with it. So that I have the greatest praise for my wife. As for my brother, he was my partner in business and at times I felt dreadful about saying, now look, I'm afraid I can't do so and so this afternoon, I've got a meeting with some committee or board. But then this was going on not completely full time but one couldn't have a full-time job outside of your own family business and he was most tolerant and understanding, he really was. I was pleased that he was a member of the Forestry Board and I'm sure it was my brother who originated the matter of what they call the Arboretum at St John's and the planting of deciduous trees. Planting... when you live in Peel and you go along and you see alongside the road sometimes some amenity planting, he was most keen on that. He was very good. He was

a wonderful partner to me. He put up with a great deal of trouble over my absence and I'm very grateful to him. So you see, I couldn't have, some people would say, played in politics for so long without those two people being so good to me.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes, well we've consequently covered a great deal of time, as I said before, in a short space of time. We've covered from 1914 to 1997 and, it's your birthday next month on 24th -

**Mr Irving:** May.

**Mr Doyle:** May, I'm sorry. Well in two months, we're in March now, and we've got a lot of subjects but are there any points you want to add or any comments you want to make about the future of the Island and the challenges it faces at the moment?

**Mr Irving:** (Laughing) Oh ho ho! I'm a bystander now, aren't I? I'm an onlooker for all sorts of things. Well, no, I've two bees in my bonnet and a feeling there are three but I can't... the third just doesn't come to mind. Two bees in my bonnet and one is that I think when people say about democracy on the Isle of Man, it is certainly not in terms of electoral law a democracy here because some people in the Island have three votes, some have two and some have one. In other words some people vote one member of the Keys, other people can vote for two members and other people can vote for three. It is explained that this of course is the different sizes of the constituencies. Well it is normal, I would think, in British democracy to try to have constituencies in a country of more or less equal size, or equal size in terms of population, so that people have equal votes with equal power. So I would very much like to see that changed. If you say, well why didn't you do something about it, well, I did propose in Tynwald once that we had nothing but two-seat constituencies in the Isle of Man and then everybody would have two votes. We'd all be quite equal. The other thing that concerns me is the question of immigration, of the control of immigration. Now every country, I believe, should have controls available to be used in connection with immigration. Whether they use them or not, they ought to be available. Now, at one time in the Isle of Man, before the European Community, we were part of the common travel area where people living in the United Kingdom, the Channel Island, and Eire could come here and live. There was nothing to stop them, there was no control, they just moved here, that's all. But of course in our relationship with the European Community we've said that we will not, or we're not allowed to, discriminate between the members, so we can't say we'll let English people come here but we won't let French or any other person who is a national of a Community country. So now, very roughly, I reckon we are open to 400 million people are entitled to come and live in the Isle of Man whenever they feel like it. Now I'm not suggesting that the odd million are just going to move here overnight but it might be some time in the future that we might want to restrict immigration and we ought to have the laws or the regulations, certainly we've got to have the laws, to enable us to impose controls and it isn't something you can do in five minutes, you know.

**Mr Doyle:** I think there was a question in Tynwald on Tuesday complaining about the delay with the Residency Bill. So there's clearly political concern there.

**Mr Irving:** Well, I have a note upstairs, I don't know what the date was, saying that the Residency Bill had been with the Home Office for 18 months. Now that may be. Well it wouldn't be 18 years ago but it certainly could be several years ago. You see, it isn't really a question for the Home Office. We send things to the Home Office for drafting purposes, in other words drafting corrections and so on. We've had many rows in Tynwald where the Home Office have interfered with the policies, but providing we keep to our international obligations on no discrimination I would have thought that the Home Office wouldn't be terribly interested in it. I can't think of any items, any particular parts of it that would worry them. In any case we should not tolerate the delay.

**Mr Doyle:** No, so your main concern is to have controls there, or the numbers?

**Mr Irving:** Yes, my main concern, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** I mean, you're not against people from other countries coming over here and living here and adding to the spice of life over here and the different types of people as the world gets

smaller?

**Mr Irving:** No. We could get a number of people coming here to live who would not be adding to the spice of life but would be doing great damage to the quality of life. I've heard people here saying we'd be like Hong Kong. Seriously, a member of Tynwald got up and said it one day, but there is... We decided some time ago that the minute there's 75,000 and 75,000 was the figure that we could cope with in terms of many services, such as policing and water and all sorts of things like that. I don't know, is 75,000 the ideal? Should we be stopping immigration now? I feel a lot of people are interested in thinking we have a control on immigration. It is very light at the moment. We haven't but they would like us to have one.

**Mr Doyle:** On the other side of that coin, I mean, the Manx people who have travelled say to Canada or to other parts of the world to set up businesses and to join part of those communities, you'd encourage that in a way would you? I mean Manx people, obviously, can return to the Island but they should have the right to free travel throughout the world.

**Mr Irving:** Manx people should have the right to free travel? Travel, yes.

**Mr Doyle:** Oh, I'm sorry, travel and no residence .....

**Mr Irving:** Travel and not only residence. Well I don't think we can. I would think that Manx people had the right of residence now in the European countries for example but not every country in the world, I think, would allow it. I don't think the Americans would, but are you thinking that if we stop people coming here... One's got to consider that because a number of Manx people who've emigrated to the United Kingdom but I don't believe that the same proportion of young people emigrate now as they used to because there are more job opportunities here.

**Mr Doyle:** So are you generally optimistic about the future of the Island?

**Mr Irving:** Oh yes, I'm always optimistic about life generally, you know. I'm a born optimist. It's not always a good thing to be too optimistic but I am. Yes, I would think so. I would like to see less dependence on the financial sector. I think that's most important. Now we were talking about residence controls, I was once asked to go and do... you know I used to go to Granada and do pieces there. One Thursday they said, come over, we want to do something this evening. So I managed to get on the morning plane and went over and I said, 'What is it?' and they said, 'Oh, it's about immigration' and I sat there and when the programme started - they won't talk to you about the thing beforehand because it then sounds too stilted, they say, so he said, 'You have come... Oh, I remember he usually said, 'Now I'm not going to tell him what the first question is.' Well, they didn't usually so I thought there must be something good coming up and he said, 'I want to talk to you and I've asked you to come here and justify the policy of the Manx Government to stop all immigration except by wealthy people?' and I said, 'Yes, tell me more' and I was embarrassed but this is what it looked like to everybody. Now the proposal, I believe, in the Residence Bill, maybe not stated all the way through or if it's stated, is that people with Manx connections can come over here and Manx connections can be a pretty vague term, people who've come here on holidays so many times and people with relations here or people who have lived here before, people with businesses here and so on, and people who would be of value to the economy, who would make an important contribution. Now when we talked about this years ago I said I interpret this to mean that a lathe operator in a factory would be a person making a financial contribution if we were short of that particular type of person and everybody agreed, yes. So that I remember saying that if we are going to talk about having increased population in the future, we should specify that the expansion of our industrial sector, for example, would require more people to come here, key workers and so on, and not just say 'require more people'. In other words, not try and encourage more general immigration but where they could be of value to the community. I mean very liberally applied, not just a guy who was going to pay so much as they've done in Jersey, has so much money or going to pay so much tax and so on, but I think one's got to remember that we did have, I couldn't name the date, I can't even say for sure now what decade it was but we did get an awful lot of new residents in a very short period and they weren't, I suppose one could say, absorbed into the community very

well. In fact there was an awful lot of trouble at the time because so many came so quickly. The same number spread out over a period wouldn't cause the same difficulty.

**Mr Doyle:** This is why you want the controls to be introduced?

**Mr Irving:** Well, I want controls to be available. Yes, it's like, I can't think of an example offhand where in life you don't want to do anything all the time. Like you have a fire extinguisher, that doesn't mean you want to squirt it all the time over everybody and everything.

**Mr Doyle:** No, just ready in case there's an emergency.

**Mr Irving:** In cases of emergency you want something. But you see if I was to say to someone... If a hundred thousand French Algerians decided to come here at very short notice, I don't know that you could do anything about it. Now, I'm naughty there because I'm suggesting a bit of colour, aren't I. Now that's naughty. I mustn't joke. Yes, but the reaction would be stronger wouldn't it?

**Mr Doyle:** Yes.

**Mr Irving:** And fortunately coloured people have a great deal more protection and are more understood and receive more friendship and understanding from local population but you see the way to tell frightened people is to say, 'They're all a bit coloured, a hundred thousand of them' you know.

**Mr Doyle:** A guarantee for the drawbridge to be pulled up.

**Mr Irving:** Yes.

**Mr Doyle:** I'm very reluctant to pull the drawbridge up on the series of interviews that we've had now that we're coming close to the end now, and before the tape was on, when I came into this room, I said that I was quite sad because it was close to the end. That was a genuine statement, so I'll miss these interviews. I know that you'll probably be quite relieved that they are now out of the way and you won't have David Doyle calling upon you, asking you so many questions.

**Mr Irving:** No, no, it's been wonderful to have you, honestly. It's just annoying for it caught me, I had a little period a while ago where I felt, 'Oh God, I've gone to hell, I can't even do this and I can't think of that.

**Mr Doyle:** Yes. Well, I want to make just a couple of closing remarks for the record which will be on the tape.

**Mr Irving:** Well, don't make them in front of me.

**Mr Doyle:** If it's embarrassing then it's embarrassing.

**Mr Irving:** Well, it is on now, honestly, but take it home and do it at your leisure.

**Mr Doyle:** You see, you're such a modest individual.

**Mr Irving:** No I'm not, not really, I'm big-headed!

**Mr Doyle:** And you've got a lot to be big-headed about, Mr Irving. We have a lot to learn from you and I'm sure that those who listen to these tapes in the years to come will appreciate the important part you've played in the history of the Isle of Man, although you endeavour on every available occasion to play that down. For a man of so many considerable achievements, for a man who has contributed so much to the Isle of Man, you're very modest, very reticent, very Manx, always happier transferring the credit to others rather than taking the praise yourself, always underestimating the importance of the decisions you've made, the ideas you've put forward and the contributions that you have made. Mr Irving, you're an excellent example of all the good qualities and character of a fine Manxman. You've made so many valuable contributions and yet you've kept your feet

firmly on the ground and you've always been guided by principles of fairness and by common sense. You are, no doubt, a man of many achievements, instrumental in the formation of the Action Group in the 1950s, instrumental in the abolition of surtax and the creation of the finance sector, the establishment of the Sports Council, you were the lead negotiator in establishing the Island's relationship with Europe under Protocol 3, a Protocol which has served the Island very well for very many years and I mention only a few of your significant achievements and I'm conscious that I've missed an awful lot out. You are a man above all of much foresight and history has shown that you were well ahead of your time on many important issues and yet you persuaded others to accept them. You were ahead of your time on tourism, on marketing, and on promoting the Island. You were ahead of your time in stressing the importance of our heritage, our culture, our history, and in the 1950s you were calling for, in your words, 'the dignified development of Castle Rushen, Peel Castle and Tynwald Day'. You were definitely ahead of your time on the importance of heritage and history. You were ahead of your time on the importance of sport and sporting facilities on the Island. You were ahead of your time on abolishing surtax and creating the finance sector and you were ahead of your time in recognising the importance of adhering to international obligations. When all those vote catching politicians on the Isle of Man were stressing the need to keep the birch, you were stressing the need to adhere to international obligations. You were ahead of your time on constitutional reform, reducing the powers of the Governor, increasing the powers of those elected by the people, the Keys, on the redistribution of seats and on a purer form of democracy. You were always bold and fearless in Manx politics and indeed the very first example of this was your first appearance at Tynwald Day at St John's in the open air, where you challenged the Governor who was none too keen to allow the presentation of a petition of grievance. You were successful in many elections to the House of Keys. You were a progressive, modern thinker with due regard to our past, our history, our culture, our heritage, and yet with your eyes firmly on the future, indeed only moments ago you made reference to the good old days in your mind being 'today and tomorrow'. You had your eye on the ball, you wished the continued economic prosperity of the Island and the social development of the Island and you did a lot towards achieving those important goals. Mr Irving, you reached the top in politics. You were the first Manx Prime Minister, first Chairman of Executive Council, you've been a great ambassador and elder statesman of the Isle of Man worldwide. You are devoted and committed to the Island, its community and its way of life. You symbolise, Mr Irving, everything that is good about the Island and its people. In short, and no doubt to your great embarrassment, Mr Irving, you're one of the great Manx worthies of whom this Island is proud. Thank you for talking to us.