

Mapping Museums project interview transcript

Name: Jasper Pettie

Role: Secretary Treasurer and founding Trustee

Museum: Scottish Vintage Bus Museum

Location of interview: Meeting room SVBM

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Interviewer(s): Toby Butler

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The project is based at Birkbeck, University of London. The interview recordings and associated materials are archived at the Bishopsgate Library, London.

For readability the transcript has been made using 'intelligent' transcription (removing ums, ers etc). The interviewee has reviewed this transcript and minor amendments have been made for clarity.

TB: Could you just state your name and date of birth if you don't mind?

JP: My names Jasper Pettie, my date of birth is XX-XXX 1945.

[0:00:16.0]

TB: Lovely, and Jasper could you just tell me your role in the museum, your current role or any other roles that you've had?

JP: Yes, I am the Secretary Treasurer, I'm the Founding Trustee. My role in the museum is to look after the finances and I take the minutes at the various committee meetings and I also produce a quarterly newsletter for members.

TB: Ok, lovely.

JP: A copy of which I've forgotten to bring but I've got some booklets anyway.

TB: Don't worry, thanks for the leaflet that's brilliant. And also, you were just telling me a little bit about your background and so you know, just kind of a thumbnail you were saying that you have an accounting background.

JP: Right, going back to when I was a little boy, our family in the late 40's like most families didn't have a car so we travelled everywhere by public transport and of course that was mainly by bus and I found myself at a very young age being fascinated by the different buses that we travelled on, the sounds that they made and the fact that they were different. One day I'd get on a bus that had wooden seats or green seats or whatever, and of course being an inquisitive little boy, I said to my parent's, 'why is this?' and of course they had no idea, being absolutely not interested basically, you know they weren't in the transport business. But all this fuelled my interest and of course I went, as I got older, I went through the spotting stage and of course I had books with numbers and books that I'd put numbers in and all this kind of thing.

[0:01:58.1]

TB: And can I just ask, trainspotting there's a publisher which kind of did that and published all the numbers and stuff.

JP: Yes Ian Allan, yes.

[0:02:03.8]

TB: But did Ian Allan do buses?

JP: Yes, they did

TB: Oh right.

JP: That's an interesting story because one day when I was about 10 years old, my mother came home with a book or a magazine called Buses Illustrated and up until then it was a bit of a family joke, nobody else that my family knew was interested in buses, I was on my own. My mother had been passing a newsagents and seen this magazine and she was absolutely amazed, and she came home with this magazine and said, 'there are people out there who are bus enthusiasts', and of course I was hooked. So, I somehow or other managed to get a subscription to Buses Illustrated which at that time was the only magazine that was available to people who were interested and of course, it broadened my horizons because up until then all I knew anything about buses were the ones I travelled on or when we went to visit people or what have you and of course this was nationwide, so here was the story of buses all over the place and that's what kind of nurtured my interest to the next level. So, I finished school, went into an office and eventually did an apprenticeship as a chartered accountant and then as I said, I took myself off to Canada and I'd deliberately not got involved with bus preservation because I really wanted to establish myself with a career. Some people get involved at an early age and I thought no that's not for me and when I, actually almost by accident I found a group in Vancouver where I was working who were interested and I joined them and they were virtually the first people I knew that had a like, interest as I had. There was a bus that they had from a local operator and we sort of played around with it and restored it and did various things and I was there for a couple of years, but it fired up my enthusiasm so that when I came back here, I decided that I would buy a bus. Now in England, the bus preservation movement had started in the, probably the mid 1950's but in Scotland you could count the number of preserved buses on the fingers of one hand really, up until about the late 60's. There were about half a dozen, they used to turn up to rallies, car rallies and everybody would say 'oh look there's an old bus, fancy that' sort of thing, it was a joke. The very first event that sort of catered for buses was an event at Dunbar and the local authority had - it was a tourist thing - and they had a car rally every year and somehow or another we hijacked it and ultimately we had about 30 or 40 buses used to come to this from all over the country, and it was a road run through East Lothian and we had prizes at the end and it was a great sort of thing to go out and enjoy a day out in the country and then at the end of it all hopefully you won some kind of a prize, or not as the case may be and you met all kinds of like-minded people and it was great.

[0:05:22.3]

TB: And were the people coming to this Scottish collectors, or was it UK wide?

JP: It was UK wide.

TB: Oh right.

JP: Well it started off Scottish, but one or two people came up from England, there weren't that many rallies, it's not like now where there's something on every weekend from about March right through to November. There were probably about half a dozen really important bus rallies particularly.

[0:05:44.5]

TB: And this is the 60's we're talking about?

JP: This was, well early 1970's, early 1970's, I think Dunbar started in 1969 and I went the first year in 1970 and then it built up from there. Sadly, it's no longer run, but in its heyday, there were 200 vehicles there of which 50 possibly were buses and maybe another 20 or 30 were commercial vehicles you know, as well as the cars. So that's how it started, and then I was very lucky because the biggest problem with a bus, as you can imagine, is its size and where do you park it?

TB: Yes.

JP: And I learnt very quickly that you cannot leave it outside, apart from vandalism and the possibility of damage and everything else, you leave a vehicle like that outside to the elements it very quickly deteriorates. So, the first thing was to basically, find somewhere to put it and it was a double decker, so it obviously had to be a pretty high shed.

[0:06:46.5]

TB: You haven't told me how you found this bus, was it kind of advertised or?

JP: I wanted a particular type of bus; I was particularly interested in Guy buses.

[0:06:57.1]

TB: Guy?

JP: Guy. And because they were vehicles that I'd travelled in when I was a child.

TB: I see.

JP: And by 1970 they were becoming quite thin on the ground, so I actually went around and had a look at the ones that were left and by that time I was in the bus industry and I was working for the Scottish Bus Group or one of the companies, and one of the sister companies had one or two left and I was able to buy a vehicle from that company and that's what started it.

[0:07:32.0]

TB: I see, are they very expensive or was it like a few hundred pounds?

JP: 100 quid.

[0:07:36.3]

TB: £100 is that all? I know that was a bit more then but still.

JP: They're a bit more expensive now but £100, it was basically scrap value, that's what it was but it was in fairly good condition.

[0:07:47.5]

TB: Yes, but now you've got the problem of where to put it?

JP: So, then I had the problem of where to put it and there was a guy that I knew had rented a shed from, what was then British Rail at North Berwick so that was ok. But then we were, they decided to sell the shed for housing development and so that was a bit of a problem but a shed came up for sale just outside of Dalkeith and I was able to twist the arm of one of my relatives to lend me the money to buy it and because it housed, or it was capable of housing three buses I was able to get another couple of buses in to pay the rent, to pay rent which serviced the debt. And I've used that model ever since, because we were there from 1972 through to 1986 by which time there was a yard next door and by which time various other people had joined us and the yard was filling up, so we had about 10 or 15 buses at that point.

[0:09:03.4]

TB: And this was an outdoor yard?

JP: This was an outdoor yard.

TB: Ok yes.

JP: But it was quite secure, and it was in a rural area so, in the country.

[0:09:10.2]

TB: Ok and this wasn't open to the public right? This was like a workshop?

JP: No there was no opening to the public, it was basically a storage facility and we used it as a base to go to rallies and we went to rallies in England as well you know, we went down to, we went as far as Brighton, the London to Brighton run which is for commercial vehicles in May. So, but then after about seven or eight years we were starting to look around because we were getting big, we had you know, a good number of people. We started looking around for something and we found a shed, a big shed which had just been vacated by a haulage contractor who had gone bankrupt and I heard about this and I thought right ok, so we went along to the liquidator who came up with what was basically, they wanted shot of it, so we bought the place. And again, I went back to my relative and said you know, you've done such a good job and I'd repaid her all the money and I said to her 'look can you do it again?', and she said 'yes, yes, you know basically your track record's good', so we did the same again but of course a much bigger scale.

This would take about 30 or 40 buses, it was a big shed, the size of you know, one of these big sheds with a couple of acres of land standing so we moved into that and of course, we were then joined by more people who had been looking around and they said, 'oh right yes let's come in'. So, by this time we were, we'd actually set up the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, this was about 1985, 86 and we set it up as a registered charity, private charity, so right away we were enjoying the benefits of charity you know, tax and exemption, all that kind of thing. And really, that was the next steppingstone, we were then able to start having on a modest scale, actual events. So once a year we had an open day and again, bus companies came and brought their vehicles and other people came along, people of the public came along and it sort of started to, you know. The other interesting thing was we were running buses because we couldn't park all the cars that were coming, we rented, or we borrowed a local school playground which they kindly lent us which we used for parking and we ran a shuttle bus. Well of course, what we realised, and the great thing about buses is that they can carry passengers and people love - particularly kids - love to travel on buses, and this is one of the reasons why they're so popular as compared with say, vintage cars or tractors or lorries, you can look at a vintage car, tractor or lorry, you can travel on a bus and that's where we've got a unique, if you like, thing.

TB **Yes.**

JP: And we realised this quite early on. So, we were there for about 10 years, I think.

[0:12:28.9]

TB: Sorry, where was this did you say?

JP: This was actually a place called Whitburn halfway between Edinburgh and Glasgow, right off the motorway.

[0:12:36.7]

TB: Yes and it was a similar kind of, industrial...?

JP: It was yes, it was kind of a rundown industrial place, we had a bit of problems with local, well not vandals so much as just thieving and what have you, but the next piece of really good luck was, next door to us was a cold store, you know it was run by a local supermarket who were then taken over and they pulled out of the cold store. Then along comes a dairy, bought the cold store and then started making overtures to us because we were equal distance between Edinburgh and Glasgow, right off the motorway, they saw this as a useful base to run their fleet of milk floats and lorries and what have you. So we thought, right ok, this is all very well but it's not just a question of us moving out, we need to find somewhere to put these vehicles, so we did a sale and leaseback with them and I got hold of a firm of chartered surveyors that I knew and basically said to them, 'right we're looking for basically a shed to house 40 buses and what have you', and so we were looking for a while and then this place came up. Actually, I found it myself, it was advertised, so we came and looked at it, 96 acres, you can see that is an aerial view taken about the time when we bought it.

[0:14:07.8]

TB: I know you told me already but just for the recording, tell me about the history of the place because it's quite intriguing.

JP: Well it was built by the Ministry of Defence in, well they started building here in 1940 and the plan was that this would be a...

[0:14:24.9]

TB: Do you mind if I take your photo, is that ok? Just quickly?

JP: Yes.

TB: Thank you.

JP: My mugshot. This would be a base for, a storage base for the Rosyth Dockyard and the idea was that we're nestling in the hills above, well away from Dunfermline, well away from a lot of urban activity and hopefully, away from prying enemy aircraft and that basically did the job because as far as I know the Germans didn't, they certainly didn't bomb this place and whether they knew about it or not nobody knows, but that was basically the rationale for establishing this place up here. And then in about 1993 which was the year before I found it, they already moved out and what was interesting was one or two of the people that are here, worked up here for the MoD and, well they're here now in a different capacity, so the deal was that we put a bid in for the whole place which was going to be absolutely, we didn't know what we were going to do with it. We were outbid, which was probably the best thing because we were outbid by a firm of basically estate management people that wanted to

use it for letting out industrial units and they realised that it was too big for them so we did a deal and we split the place, we split it in two, we put a fence up halfway down the site so we've got approximately 45 acres, they've got approximately 45 acres and so here we are.

[0:16:21.9]

TB: So, you bought the freehold on this half of the?

JP: We bought the freehold on the basis that the dairy company that bought us out of Whitburn paid over the odds.

TB: Yes.

JP: And because the value of this place was anything you like, because who wants a rundown, former naval base with MoD buildings which are far too big for anything apart from storing large objects i.e. buses, so we were on a winner.

[0:16:55.0]

TB: So how much did you pay for this, if it's not secret?

JP: Do you know I can't remember; it was somewhere in the region of £280,000.

TB: Right, wow that's a lot of land.

JP: But it was bought and paid for and we still had money in the bank.

TB: Amazing.

JP: And of course, the model that I'd used at Whitburn was basically scaled up for here and again, we attracted people and of course, at first, we thought all these big sheds, how are we going to fill them? And within five years we had virtually everything, you know we'd been virtually at 99% capacity and we'd got a waiting list.

[0:17:34.4]

TB: That's amazing, and just say how many buses have you got here?

JP: 175 approximately, give or take.

[0:17:39.3]

TB: And of those, how many do the museum own?

JP: Of that, there's probably about a dozen or so, maybe slightly more. The bulk of vehicles are owned by individuals or individual groups and the museums source of revenue, in fact the main source of revenue is in fact from rents from these people.

[0:17:57.3]

TB: Yes, and you're saying they pay £55 a month?

JP: They pay £55 a month, I run the finances, I basically check to see everyone's paying and you know, that's it sort of thing. There's other, well there's other sources of funding that we do have as well

[0:18:17.7]

TB: Could you just run through those?

JP: Yes, well the other main one is the public coming in. We're open on Sunday's, we have a guided tour, it's called Guide Sunday, Sunday afternoons and that's built up, it started off not very many people came but we have probably 40, 50, 60 possibly more on good days every Sunday, from well from the 1st of April through to the end of September and we also have various events, we have two events of our own, one in May - an open day, just a single day - and then in August we have our main open weekend but we also have a couple of car clubs come up here and they rent the place and to be fair, those events generate far more money than the ones we run purely buses because you've got cars, you've got every type of vintage vehicle, cars, lorries, tractors, military vehicles, commercial vehicles, buses, the lot, stationary engines. The place is stowed out and there's not, we have people who have to, scouts who have got the parking down to a fine art because you have to pack the vehicles in, you know to fit them into the space. We do have undeveloped areas that we're looking at to basically create more parking but that's a long-term thing.

[0:19:54.8]

TB: Gosh, so these are, so it's not just one car club coming in, it's...

JP: Well there's the Fife Historic Vehicle Club, they have a big event every year.

[0:20:05.1]

TB: I see, with a variety of vehicles?

JP: That's right and then there's another one which is the pre, they call themselves the pre 67 Ford Owners Club but again, it's basically a re-run of the previous one, it's anybody who's got a vintage vehicle of a certain age or older of a certain age welcome.

[0:20:22.0]

TB: **I see. Because I guess if you own a car right, and most people who own a vintage vehicle probably will have it at home, but yes you want to meet other owners don't you and get it out.**

JP: This is ideal for that because you can come up, you can meet loads and loads of people and you also meet people who are involved in other forms of transport as well if you care to do that. So, that's the second source of income, we also rent out for instance, this place we rent to the police - maybe I shouldn't say that - but they have police training up here and anything that generates you know, money for various things, we have had the local NHS Fife doing seven hours up here, they don't do it now but you know it's things like that and this is ideal for that.

[0:21:17.4]

TB: **Yes, it's good because you've got a big converted, kind of was the old dining hall but has got a dancefloor and a bar, yes.**

JP: Well we saw that as an investment, and we pumped money into this, and it's paid off you know; it's an ideal situation and it certainly has paid off and we're always open to suggestions from people about the various things that we can do here.

[0:21:41.5]

TB: **Yes, that's fantastic. Well let me just go back to a couple of things, one is what's really lovely about the way that you said why you were interested in buses and it went all the way back to your childhood, but you said that you wanted particularly to have a bus, the bus you got on a child. Can you just tell me why, what was that about do you think? What joy did it give you in that respect?**

JP: Well it's a difficult question to answer. That started my interest, what then developed for me personally, was taking something a bit older and a bit more decrepit if you like, and bringing that to a restored state, so the next two buses I had were vehicles which needed a lot of work done on them and I suddenly found myself - and not just me personally because there were various other people involved - I suddenly found that hugely interesting as a leisure activity after having sat in an office from nine to five, Monday to Friday, I looked forward to going out at the weekend and making progress. And at the end of the day you've got something to show for it, and I learnt a lot of skills which I hadn't had before and each

time I took a different vehicle, once I'd finished a vehicle I got to the stage where I thought right, I'll tackle something else. So what started off as one vehicle and my thought of basically, that's it then became six, seven, eight vehicles so I spent a great deal of time, less so after I got married and with children of course, but that was basically what my hobby was, restoring you know and then of course we were able to take them to rallies and when my children, I've got two boys that were growing up and we used to go to various events and they would bring their chums along and the families and we'd all have a picnic and it was all tremendous fun.

[0:23:46.9]

TB: Oh, that's great, so...

JP: And again, it was this thing about having buses that can carry people and you know are user friendly and all that sort of thing.

[0:23:53.1]

TB: Yes, I see right, lovely, that's fascinating. And we came across this with trains and train restoration just how you're saying and someone there said that often accountants and you know, managers and stuff would come and they'd really want to learn about the workshop stuff and the workshop guys, well the guys that worked in the factories, often they'd be running the you know, the station, ticketing or whatever it was because they wanted something different as well.

JP: They want something different. There's very few people who work at a job nine to five, Monday to Friday who'll do the same thing at the weekend and if they do then I think there's something wrong with them. In other words, yes, we've got people who are accountants, we've got doctors, we've got lecturers, teachers, we've got guys who work on the railway who come up here to work on buses, you name it we've got everything. The only thing we don't have are thespians, we've never had anybody and that's the one discipline if you like or one profession that don't seem to take to it, and we've done film jobs you know, we're often asked to do - not often - but from time to time we're asked to do jobs where it calls for a vintage bus to turn up and be part of the furniture and everything else, and they don't get it. I mean I've met some interesting actors who basically just you know, they think we're nuts, and the media used to think that too because when we started, this was another thing, people would, particularly the media would sort of thing you know, there's something wrong with them. That changed over the years and now it's actually quite a, you know the local paper will do a big thing about us and you know, and they're with us and not against us now.

[0:25:41.5]

TB: Really, that's interesting so a corner was turned, so...

JP: And I think that's the same for the preservation movement at the railways as well, you know people thought that railway buffs were freaks who restored railways but now it's a big business, I mean you know when you look at things like the Flying Scotsman and what's the other one, anyway these things cost a fortune to restore but they generate huge sums of money you know, nothing like, far more than anything we do here but it's the same scaled down you know?

[0:26:16.3]

TB: **Yes, absolutely that's interesting. And just tell me, when did you start opening to the public? Because you said that in 86 you kind of moved here, is that right?**

JP: Well before, when we were still at Whitburn we were open to the public once a year, we had an event and it took all our time and effort to get that going. We realised that when we came here, we wanted to have a public persona and the first thing we did was, we realised that we needed to get planning consent to do that, so we went to the local authority and said well this is an industrial estate, we want to run it as a museum, so alright ok. So anyway, we basically it took us a year, but we managed to get that sorted.

[0:27:00.2]

TB: **Really so you needed planning for that? That's interesting.**

JP: You need to be a museum.

[0:27:04.5]

TB: **Change of use, right. But just to check, why did you, I mean you could have just carried on and it probably would have made enough money for you not to have it open to the public, so what was the drive behind that? Was it a financial thing or was it something else?**

JP: I think it's something to do with appreciation, you bask in the fact that people come up here and they make all the right noises, and I think we would have been accused of being a bit insular. The other thing of course is, that as a charity we enjoy 80% rates remission, the other 20% is discretionary by the local authority, now in order to get that 20% discretion we need to do a few things and one of these things is basically to be, well to be open to the public, to have facilities that, or to be open say for people, disabled people coming up, you know on special visits, we make an effort to do these things in order to keep in with the local authority and you know, we feel that we are a public attraction in this area and there's really a lot of, we get a lot of kudos for that and it also gives us feedback from the public and we're on TripAdvisor, I don't think we've, we've maybe had one thing but most of them are that. So yes it's, not everybody I have to say, there are a lot of people here all they do is they come and restore their vehicles that are bunkered, they do this you know and they don't get

involved with the public, others don't work on their vehicles and do go out to the public so it's you know...

TB: Yes, it's their thing.

JP: Yes, it's people get different things out of the museum and therefore we all come together and it's a unit if you like.

[0:29:06.3]

TB: Yes, I mean just going back to who's attracted to it, I mean you also said there were you know, ex-engineers and mechanical people obviously most of the big skills are woodwork or coachwork, there's upholstery but clearly engineering and mechanics.

JP: Yes and electrics you know, electronics and that sort of thing.

[0:29:26.8]

TB: So, it almost sounds as though, in terms of class and background it sounds like there's a fair mix actually which is interesting.

JP: Oh, we're a great mix of different strata's if you like all coming together and you know.

[0:29:41.9]

TB: So, they're kind of uniting around a passion, aren't they?

JP: Yes that's right.

[0:29:44.4]

TB: And just tell me about how you learnt the skills because, I mean do you literally say, 'oi Ted can you show me how to take this wheel off?'.

JP: Yes I suppose there's a bit of that, it's a bit of just trying something and making a balls of it and then doing it again and getting it right and then somebody comes along and, I was lucky because I worked in the bus industry, I worked for a bus company, I was able to basically chat to engineers and say how does this work? Or I can take something in, and they'd fix it and then you would say 'how did you do that?', oh right ok, so you just pick up all these things as you go. There's a lot of things I can't do obviously, I'm much older now so I don't do as much as I used to, but I got by you know, we were never stuck.

[0:30:26.1]

TB: And are there moments where you need a group of people to actually work?

JP: Oh yes, yes.

TB: And so, how does that, in terms of organisationally, how does that work? Do you sort of say literally...

JP: Oi lads, we need a hand here, we're lifting this gearbox right, come on.

TB: Ok yes.

JP: You know? And pushing a bus or moving a bus, you know sometimes the easier thing rather than hitching up a wagon to pull it is just to get some muscle power and shove the bloody thing. And of course, people will drop what they're doing if it's only a couple of minutes to shove something, so you know we all muck in.

[0:30:52.5]

TB: You all muck in yes. What about tools and stuff? Does the museum have like a shared tool thing?

JP: Yes there's a bit of that, there's specialist tools which the museum owns and has collected, the majority of hand tools are owned by individuals because obviously most people you know, prefer to use their own equipment, tools and what have you. The electrical stuff we have things like battery chargers and lifts which of course have to be inspected every six months and certificated and everything else, there's a forklift truck, there's various things so it's a mix of museum supplied equipment and individuals supplying their own small hand tools and that sort of thing.

[0:31:40.6]

TB: Ok and also there's an issue you know, with safety and I know with steam engines they have to, the engines have to be certified but I guess with public commercial vehicles you're looking at I suppose the MOT system?

JP: Well yes, the vehicles have to be MOT'd now so if the vehicles are being used on a semi-commercial basis, they have to be inspected on a routine thing every so many weeks. The MOT thing has relaxed recently because vehicles over 40 years old no longer require an MOT if they're not being used commercially so it means that a lot of vehicles which were here which had to have MOT's no longer require it which is actually quite a, well in many ways it's a good thing but on the other hand the onus is on somebody - well the person, the owner -

to make sure that vehicle is fit for the road because not having an MOT doesn't involve you or doesn't absolve you from putting a vehicle out on the road which is unfit so we have a system whereby qualified engineers, and I say qualified engineers will inspect your vehicle for a small charge and pronounce it roadworthy or not and then we'll give you a list of things that you need to do.

[0:33:01.0]

TB: And I guess that's particularly important if you've got members of the public that are going to get on to it?

JP: Absolutely, absolutely yes.

[0:33:05.9]

TB: So, you've got your own internal MOT system in a way?

JP: Yes.

[0:33:08.3]

TB: Ok wow, that's interesting, yes.

JP: Yes, but some people, you can still voluntarily have a MOT on your bus even though it might not require one legally and some people still feel that's important and that's fine.

[0:33:22.6]

TB: And just tell me a little bit of kind of background now, so this is sort of just you know a broad brushstroke history of bus collecting, so with trains there were some key moments and one of which was things like nationalisation when you know, suddenly a lot of things became available or in 68 when steam finally went up, so there is these sort of key moments. In the history of bus collecting are there similar kind of big patterns like that?

JP: Not quite so pronounced but there are, for instance, up until the early 50's most buses were what were called half cabs, in other words the driver sat on his own alongside the engine and then of course the underfloor engines on buses and then rear engines came in so people got in and paid the driver and all this kind of thing. And really, around about the late 60's, early 70's or through to probably, maybe a few years after that half cab buses, traditional half cab buses were dwindling. So really, at the end of the day there's people like myself who are really into half cab buses more than anything else and there's other people who feel that you know, underfloor engine buses and what have you, and particularly now I must

admit it's a lot more difficult to clamber into a cab at my age than it is just to walk straight up the step and into the driver's seat but I suppose you could say that was a big time when...

[0:34:57.3]

TB: So, these buses were coming on to the market basically or being, as they changed over from one to the other?

JP: Yes, but it wasn't, there was never an event in terms of steam being abandoned, which really got everybody going, there wasn't really an event really in the history of buses that sort of precipitated anything quite as dramatic as that.

[0:35:18.8]

TB: I see what you mean because it was much more gradual really, you'd say? Sure, and I suppose some of those old fleets in London, those single or those half cab ones all running in London you know still are.

JP: That's right and the other thing of course is that a railway, and locomotives if you like, steam locomotives or whatever requires probably more support than one person can produce whereas an individual can own a bus and be quite quirky about it whereas you need a team of people really and that's why railway preservation groups got together probably quicker than we did.

TB: I see yes.

JP: You know, because railway preservation or locomotive restoration really requires a team of people, let's be honest.

[0:36:05.4]

TB: Do you have individual bus collectors who you know, somehow manage to have a big garage or something, or?

JP: Well I was really in the early days, I was the first person to actually buy a shed and I thought right, I'm not beholden to somebody that's going to chuck me out at a moment's notice, and that's how I started off but there are still a lot of people out there, a lot of museums actually that are there at the whim of be it a local authority or a landlord or something and there have been some pretty horrible stories about plugs being pulled and people having to find space for buses that have been more or less turfed out of accommodation overnight and I set out to basically say right I'm not going to have that, we need to have security of tenure which means owning you know, and that's the one thing that we have here which we're very

lucky. We've had a series of opportunities that we grasped, and we said right let's go for it and we've never looked back.

[0:37:07.2]

TB: Has there been any kind of big bus museum closures that I don't know about?

JP: Yes there was one, a very good friend of mine who was the chairman of the Aston Manor Museum in Birmingham and it was right next to Aston Villa Football Club and they had an old tram depot, a lovely place actually it was a tremendous place, and they'd got notice to quit because they basically, I think the local authority decided to develop it and this old tram depot, despite the fact that it was very popular and it was a tourist attraction and everything else and they have had a real problem. They did find somewhere else, I'm not quite sure exactly where it is but it's outside Birmingham, but it didn't house all the vehicles, it wasn't big enough to house all the vehicles that they had and I think a lot of the collections been dispersed and I think even now, there is a problem with the new premises that they might have to move again. So yes, these things do happen and the Glasgow Bus Museum I think they are very much on a wing and a prayer with the local authority, they've got a lovely bus garage in Bridgeton in Glasgow and it's well developed and everything else but they pay rent to the local authority and you know, if somebody decides to come along and develop the area they could have a problem.

[0:38:33.5]

TB: Well yes, because I suppose these are big land masses aren't, they you know, spatially which are perfect for big flats or developments and also, they're in urban areas, I'd imagine bus depots tend to be either on the edge of the town or in the middle of it.

JP: Yes, that's right and when these depots close, more often than not a developer will see it as an opportunity to either put housing or commercial or retail there. This is the beauty of this place, we're in the middle of nowhere and it's just a quirk of fate that the MoD decided to build here because it's very, I mean I think personally, I don't think that the people who own the industrial estate next to us really have got all that many tenants that are paying very much.

[0:39:27.9]

TB: I was going to say it looks quite empty with the sign board.

JP: It's pretty derelict, we're actually looking at the possibility of opening, we're actually at the bottom of our site there's a farm road which takes us on to the road that goes up to Knock Hill, you know the racing place? And with a bit of work to the track, we could actually put in a decent road which we're looking at as a possible long term project and we would close off

having to come through the industrial estate and have our main entrance at the bottom and then we'd be totally self-sufficient but that's a long term thing and it may never happen, but we're certainly looking at it as a possible development.

[0:40:15.7]

TB: Just because that would be a more attractive sort of shop front?

JP: Yes very much so.

TB: Yes sure, and in terms of opening, I mean you said I think it's April until October or whatever.

JP: Yes, it's April through to the end, well the first week in October which is the Fife holiday.

[0:40:30.8]

TB: Is there any kind of wish to expand that or is it just right doing it a day a week?

JP: The problem is that we're all volunteers and sometimes we're struggling to get volunteers to main on a Sunday, because people have obviously got other things to do and people go off on rallies and what have you, there are at the moment we're ok but we'd be totally stretching it to try to open at any other times without having paid, that's maybe the next stage of course is to look at funding to pay people to come in.

[0:41:09.4]

TB: I was going to ask if you pay anybody at all?

JP: No.

TB: Right, ok so it's always been volunteers.

JP: The biggest problem in my understanding, where you have people who are working alongside, volunteers who are working alongside paid and that creates the most horrendous problems, you may have discovered this yourself, I've certainly discovered it, I'm certainly aware of it. I don't know what the answer is, we don't have that problem at the moment but it's something we'd have to think about if we went to the next stage of opening, but then you see because we're a very specialist museum opening once a week is enough for people, we wouldn't get anybody coming up here, you have to realise that a bus museum is not on everybody's wish list you know every day and opening, we don't see a need, a requirement that we're not if you like, losing or there's not an untapped demand for it that we can't satisfy one day a week.

[0:42:12.7]

TB: Yes, would you just tell me a little bit about the people that visit, so what kind of, I don't know what kind of profile of visitor do you have?

JP: Well that's quite an interesting story, we have obviously bus enthusiasts, fellow enthusiasts who know more about the buses we've got here than we do, that happens a lot. We have a lot of people - and this is where our growth thing is - people will come, local people or people who are in the area on holiday, they'll come for a couple of hours as part of you know, going round the thing and those people are the ones who usually find, they're usually quite surprised and hopefully delighted and from the TripAdvisor reports that we get that seems to be the case. And if there are kids and we've got a bus running around, great, we've got the railway, it's not operating every Sunday but it operates, you know off and on during the summer and that is great so there's something for everyone here, and there's a shop and there's a cafe, people can sit in the cafe and have a cup of coffee and a sandwich or whatever, it's just a couple of hours and a nice day out sort of thing.

TB: Sure, yes.

JP: We've got a lot of people who come from abroad and we have a visitors book and if you read through it, it's like an international you know, and because we've got a bus that has been repatriated from Hong Kong the number of Chinese that come here is unbelievable.

TB: Really?

JP: And they take photographs of everything, it's unbelievable.

[0:43:51.4]

TB: So, is this a more recent thing, have you noticed that or?

JP: Yes, it's sort of grown over the last five, six, seven years perhaps.

[0:44:00.1]

TB: So, do you think, is this because, I suppose people are sharing it on social media?

JP: Oh yes well there is that.

TB: And TripAdvisor.

JP: Yes word gets round, and people come because of that, I think that's a lot to do with it, yes.

[0:44:11.6]

TB: And have you had any help at all in terms of grants or advice from local authorities or museum structures in Scotland at all?

JP: Not, the answer's not really, no. We've not really sold ourselves to that extent, that's the main area that we should be concentrating on more, but the trouble is, that in our experience grants are never really grants, they come with strings attached and those strings aren't necessarily strings that would fit in with our aims. There's a feeling that, well I personally feel that we've got to almost the point where we should really be looking at further development and does that involve institutional input? At the moment, we you know, we got to the stage a few years ago and then the railway people came along and they've done a tremendous amount, when people come to visit I like to think that every year - and so far we do - there's something new for people to see and people that come regularly, oh you've got this going, you've got that going sort of thing so we always have something like that. But what is the future? You see the trouble is because we're a privately-run museum and because there's no institutional funding which itself brings problems, where do we go in the future you know? The age profile of this museum is not developing to the extent that the younger, there are not the same number of younger people coming forward to take over from the old codgers like me and I think you probably realise this from a lot of museums that you visit, this is a real problem and we do our best and we have recruitment drives, we've got a guy who basically, we do have youngsters coming up now. Again, the problem is they'll come for a while and then they'll find something more interesting to do and they'll go away, there's very few that come up and stick with it and that's a big problem, it is a big, big problem, I don't know what the answer is except we just have to plug away at it.

[0:46:24.7]

TB: Yes sure, and you said something about, so you haven't had any big grants at all?

JP: We've had grants but not big ones, the lottery grant was the obvious one, I've explained that it's not really open to us from the perspective of you know, the collection being owned by individuals and for some reason the lottery people don't like that, so we've not really gone after that. The thing is, we do because of the income stream from the various sources I've described we're able to plough a lot of money back into enhancements as well as keeping all the buildings wind and watertight, that's the main thing.

[0:47:11.1]

TB: Well that's what I was wondering about, do you need grants? I mean if [unclear 0:47:14.2]...

JP: We don't really, no we don't, We don't really from the point of view that most of the things that we, well the things that we have to do are things like keeping on top of repairs, electrical repairs, we've just spent a lot of money refurbishing overhead lighting, street lighting, workshop lighting, replacing old style bulbs with LED bulbs which of course are much more energy efficient, this kind of thing. We're always attuned to that, on top of that there's things like, well the wind and watertight there's always money spent on roof's to keep them you know. But at the same time, we'll take a project like for instance here, this building was re-roofed two or three years ago at great expense, it was an asbestos roof and you know it was starting to leak so we basically put another roof on top effectively, rather than remove the asbestos.

TB: **Oh ok.**

JP: So things like that, and the main, and that was another job we did the exhibition hall which is down there, we did the roof on that about 10 years ago and that was a major, that's been one of the major, the most major jobs we've ever done but things like that have to be catered for and yes we can do that from our resources if we plan it over a period of time.

[0:48:44.1]

TB: **Ok yes so, you've got a reserve and every now and again it goes on a big thing?**

JP: Yes.

TB: **Ok sure yes.**

JP: So there are quite a few things like that, the underground cabling for instance, the electricity cables between all the buildings were 1940 MoD and we've had to replace all those at great expense but again, that was another job that will last for 50 years but we're mindful of these things, and we've got a couple of guys that are site management who go around and keep an eye on things.

[0:49:13.3]

TB: **Yes, also I mean to ask, just going back to the kind of pattern of buses and stuff but we talked about technology and how gradual that change was, but also there's organisational changes which is bigger bus companies buying out smaller ones I'd imagine and was there a nationalisation of any sort? I don't know.**

JP: Oh yes, I was involved with that. I was with one of the constituent companies of the Scottish Bus Group and I rose through the ranks as an accountant and became the secretary of the Scottish Bus Group, I was at headquarters and then in 1989 I was basically facing redundancy when the thing was privatised. I moved to one of the operating companies, we were bought

out by what is now First Group, so I went off and did something totally different, I went into and bought an engineering company along with an engineer friend of mine and we ran that, so I left the bus industry for about 20 years.

[0:50:06.7]

TB: Gosh, so sorry just tell me again, so what happened? There was a nationalisation, a de-nationalisation sorry?

JP: Well the Thatcher government decided to privatise the bus industry and they started with National Bus which was an English company and they were all split up and sold off to individuals, some of them were sold to management, some were sold to other groups, whatever.

[0:50:31.3]

TB: And this was in the 80's?

JP: This was in the 1980's and then we followed suit after a while when we thought that the Bus Group was going to be kept intact because it wasn't just us, it was actually the Scottish Transport Group which of course owned Macbraynes, so I was involved in all that. They decided that no this was going to be cut up the same way, so the individual companies were sold off and this is where the likes of Stagecoach and First Group came in and bought up and became, and of course that wasn't what the government they wanted little companies all competing with each other but of course that doesn't happen you know? That's, you know human nature is basically for the big guys to come in and buy up and create empires like Sir Brian Souter and Moir Lockhead and all these sorts of things so that's what happened basically. We benefitted to a certain extent from that because when Stagecoach particularly started to shut down totally unprofitable central workshops which of course were run under nationalised companies that they were looking at leaner and fitter management and all those sorts of things, so we benefitted from a lot of the equipment that was being chucked out or would have just been scrapped, so we were very fortunate in that sense and that happened quite early on in our tenure here.

[0:51:51.4]

TB: And that's where those massive tracks came from?

JP: That's right, yes not all of them but some, that's where we started.

[0:51:57.1]

TB: I see, and also what happened to the bus fleets, were they basically repainted and then carried on or was there?

JP: Well there's been plans, some of the bus companies like Stagecoach and First Group you know, I see today Stagecoach have announced that there's 380 buses at the cost of £80 million are you know being delivered so there's investment all the time and yes, a lot of in the early days, a lot of the buses that were taken over would have been repainted but there comes a point where a bus, probably after about 20 years reaches the end of its economic life and of course they get scrapped or sold to us and are replaced with more modern. And of course, we've now got all the various Euro three, four, five, six you know, with the emission controls and all this kind of stuff so that does also hasten obsolescence.

[0:52:57.9]

TB: Interesting, right, yes.

JP: You know in London for instance its particularly bad because, I'm not quite sure what the latest it but there's a lot of hybrid buses running and they create their own problems and you know, the cost of running these things now can be horrendous compared with what it was before because buses have become more and more sophisticated with all kinds of different gadgets to them. The great thing about restoring really old vehicles is they're dead simple because you know, there's an engine, a gearbox, no power steering, no powered doors or anything, they're so much easier to restore and youngsters, the younger people who are restoring vehicles which are sort of from the 1980's and 90's, I don't envy them at all and half of them are tearing their hair out trying to figure out why electronically things don't work you know?

TB: Yes really complex isn't it.

JP: Yes it can be really complex.

[0:53:52.8]

TB: But that's fascinating that these environmental kind of controls coming in, it will mean that there are a lot of buses coming off grid which, if there's not space for them in collections like yours they're just going to go to the scrapheap aren't they?

JP: They get scrapped yes, you can only really save constituent examples of, or specific examples of vehicles of different types. Inevitably, the vast majority of vehicles go for scrap.

[0:54:21.5]

TB: Yes, is there any kind of national, I don't know, federation of bus museums or where some of these things are discussed?

JP: There are yes, national there's NARTM which is the National Association of Road Transport Museums, we've got a guy who's a representative. They meet a couple of times a year, two or three times they go off and visit places, they produce their, they're quite good actually they produce guidelines for things like a guideline for running a free bus service and things to avoid, you know pitfalls to make sure that you don't charge fares and all this kind of thing and it's - well a lot of its common sense - it's there and that's what they do, they provide advice to museums.

[0:55:05.7]

TB: Yes great, so that's useful ok. And are you in touch with other museums in the area? I mean not necessarily just bus ones but what sort of networks are you involved in?

JP: Well probably our closest is GVVV, the Glasgow Vintage Vehicle Trust at Bridgeton and many of our members, in fact some of the people on their committee are on our committee so. There are cases of museums in proximity to each other being at loggerheads, we're not, we're very much, we work hand in hand, and we like to support their events, they come and support ours. The Glasgow Bus Museum which you saw there in that brochure, one or two of our guys get involved in that too so there's a great deal of camaraderie and we all realise we're all trying to do the same thing to a greater or lesser extent, so it doesn't make sense to you know. But apart from transport museums I don't think really, we do have, I can't think of any, I'm not saying we shouldn't have but we don't really have a great deal of contact with sort of coin museums or you know, wireless museums or something.

[0:56:24.7]

TB: Ok and have you had any kind of museum professional input in terms of the you know, the displays and all that kind of stuff or have you just done your own thing really?

JP: We were approached when we first started out here by a crowd who were going to do this, that and the other and everything else and then when they gave us a quote for what they were going to do we said thanks but no thanks, we've just basically done our own thing. We've got some guys who I have to say, are quite visionary in terms of display, we had a guy who started off the exhibition hall, he's no longer with us unfortunately but there's another chap who has taken over and he's got some great ideas and yes, it's you know, I realise that I don't have much vision in that sense and that's a great thing to leave to somebody who does, you know?

[0:57:21.3]

TB: Have you modelled it on any other transport museum in terms of display or is it more about what can fit in?

JP: To be fair we were kind of in the vanguard, we started off I think we had an exhibition hall going by about 19, let me think about 1988 or thereabouts, we were really about the first. You know, people came to see us and said, 'oh you've got an exhibition hall' and instead of having a shed just crammed with buses all you know, and you had to sort of squirrel past them all, we had them on display and other museums followed suit. I'm not saying we were necessarily the first, but we were certainly very much in the lead in that.

[0:58:05.1]

TB: How do you mean on display? Do you mean spaced out or?

JP: Spaced out so that people can look at them, read a blurb about them and sort of take photographs and you know, walk around them sort of thing.

[0:58:17.9]

TB: And get on them, do you do that or not?

JP: Well we try to discourage, we discourage people leaping on and off buses when they're parked up because you know, kids jump up and down, it's different when they're out doing a job and carrying passengers, that's different but we cordon off the interior because damage can be done very quickly to a vehicle and particularly if its owned by somebody who has graciously lent it for display, they don't want people traipsing around inside it, you know?

[0:58:47.8]

TB: Yes, and also, I guess perhaps you haven't got the staff to watch out for that sort of stuff?

JP: Well we do, we do have staff that keep an eye on it, but we try to discourage you know, we don't make it difficult for them sort of thing, most people are quite happy just to look at them.

[0:58:59.9]

TB: Yes, and did you ever go for museum accreditation or did you decide not to?

JP: Well we've got, it's different in Scotland we don't have museum accreditation here, we are affiliated with the Scottish Museum's Council, we're also, the body that oversees us is OSCR which is Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator which all museums, charitable museums are attached to.

[0:59:33.3]

TB: So that's like what the Charity Commissioners perhaps for England and Wales?

JP: That's the Scottish equivalent of the Charity Commissioners, yes.

[0:59:42.8]

TB: Sure, right so you're constitution in terms of a charity more than a museum you could say?

JP: Well in sort of legal terms yes, that's the case.

[0:59:53.1]

TB: And just tell me about, I'm rattling on, do say if you're fed up with it ok?

JP: No, I'm fine, I'm enjoying this.

TB: That's great, brilliant. Just tell me a little bit about organisation because it's interesting that you set up as a charity before you got here you know, so it was very early days, in fact you set up as a charity before you opened regularly, I'm not including events or anything but actual kind of every weekend sort of regularly. So, how does it work organisationally? You must have a committee, but do you have members, do you have friends and all that kind of stuff?

JP: Right we've got a committee, we started off we set ourselves up as a private trust with seven trustees and that was in 1986, I think five of the seven trustees are still serving, or four at least I can't remember exactly. We've had two, three resignations, that's right, we still have seven trustees and we've got another five basically volunteer committee members who have the same - committee who sit in here - who have the same clout if you like or same authority as the trustees. The trustees are only there because their name appears on the trust deed if you like but the other, so there's 12 of us altogether and we meet every six weeks or thereabouts and we plan strategy, we have an agenda which we go through, formal minutes, all that kind of thing you know and it's there basically recording. For me as treasurer, with my treasurer's hat on my concern is to approve expenditure, you know significant expenditure and things and record that so that it's there.

[1:01:43.9]

TB: I see, so that's quite regular, so that's kind of like a management committee by the sounds of it in terms of...

JP: It is a management; we call it a management committee yes.

[1:01:52.5]

TB: And do you have a membership kind of system in any way so is there like an AGM and all that kind of stuff?

JP: Yes, yes, it's kind of ad hoc, there's a membership and it's £20 or something, we've got a membership secretary who looks after that, I do a quarterly magazine which goes out to the members and there is a sort of members meeting which, funnily enough the members seem to be apathetic about it. We did have one this year, basically we open the hall and we've got various people get involved with the various things that they're, you know the workshop guy does a spiel, the site manager does a spiel, the exhibition hall people etc etc. And basically, it's there to try and drum up new blood, people come along, and it tends to be same old, same old you know. The same people come along, I'm not sure about the value of these things other than the fact that people can if you they want, have a gripe but the trouble is they don't. They'll gripe down, you know before the meeting they'll all sit down in the thingy bob and go and then they come up here and they don't say a bloody word.

TB: Right yes.

JP: So, the value of these things is somewhat tenuous, and we've had one or two years where we've just said well, we'll have it if there's a groundswell of opinion and we've gone by and we haven't had anything, but we do tend to try to have something. There is also, interspersed or interlaid with that is a sort of pep talk at the beginning of the season for volunteers to basically just sort of refresh, or if there's any changes to admission you know they need to know that we're charging a bit more or whatever, or buses not on the road or whatever, so yes it's an update really.

[1:04:02.0]

TB: So, members might be, well a mixture of volunteers and, of course these may be the same person but people that have got buses here, I guess?

JP: Oh yes, some people have buses, some people don't have buses and they volunteer.

TB: Oh, ok they're just interested.

JP: Yes, they're just interested, yes.

[1:04:17.3]

TB: And how many members do you have roughly?

JP: About 400 and, it's over 400, somewhere between 400 and 450 I think, as far as I know. It's built up gradually with the years, it's quite respectable for a place like this.

[1:04:29.3]

TB: Yes, and they get the newsletter which I suppose is a good way of keeping up.

JP: The newsletter is, they can either get it online or we do a print run of it and for my sins I produce it.

[1:04:41.3]

TB: And do you have like an online sort of forum thing or emails so people can share advice and that sort of thing?

JP: Yes, well the committee basically, apart from one member who shall be nameless were all on email so a lot of decision making is done, so the meetings are often a rubber stamping because we've all agreed that such and such will happen and this poor one member sits here and I basically, I used to phone him up and say right we've got this, and I thought why the hell don't you get yourself sorted out and he's just one of these guys who won't you know, we've had a go at him, anyway.

TB: Yes, it's hard I know.

JP: But and he misses out an awful lot because a lot of stuff is done. I'm not on Facebook or any social media but being on within email range of people is basically fine as far as I'm concerned, and you can get your message over and make decisions quickly.

[1:05:43.2]

TB: Yes sure, yes because that's quite a bit constituent group and has lots of owners too, I guess it must be great to kind of have that opportunity really. Let me just check if I've covered everything, I think we're doing pretty well.

JP: Just trying to think if there's anything else I've missed out on that's relevant.

TB: Yes please.

JP: We've done all the...

[1:06:07.0]

TB: We did sort of touch on this but the connection with the local community, I mean clearly the sites moved hasn't it, around but and also you're really obviously in a peculiar situation in as much as it's at the end of an industrial estate which is quite far out I guess from the nearest conurbation kind of thing, but do you, I don't know, do you have a relationship with the local population in anyway or?

JP: Oh yes, yes, I mean it's taken a while but most people in Dunfermline and you know throughout East Fife and West Fife, no you know, if you mention the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, they've either been here, or they know somebody who's been here, or you know.

[1:06:50.0]

TB: So, what do you think the museums given the community? A destination to take their friends to obviously.

JP: Yes, a destination, also there's another thing, a lot of people come up here and volunteer and I don't know anything about their backgrounds, I don't need to know anything about their backgrounds. The fact is that they are, for them coming up here is a breath of fresh air I think in what is possibly a strenuous lives, they may be looking after aged relatives, they may have domestic problems, they may be divorced, they may be all kinds of things and I know that people look forward to coming up here and we've got a lot of people who come up here and the few hours that they spend say on a Sunday, or even coming up to work on the buses is actually what keeps them together, keeps them going. And I know for a fact, the other interesting thing is when people die, we have had various legacies from people that we've no idea who they are. There was one situation a few years ago where I was contacted by a lawyer to say that a certain gentleman had died and he was graciously leaving his collection of memorabilia to the museum, would we make contact with his widow which we did. So we went across - it was in Ayrshire - we went across and this bungalow was, there were about five rooms that were filled with bus models, magazines, books, it took four vans to empty it out and I said to the lady, I said 'we don't know this gentleman, was he a member of the museum?' and she said, 'no' and she showed us a photograph of him and I said 'oh I recognise him', and I said he would never speak to anybody, he would come up to the museum and he would ride around on the buses on open days and he would come away and he was happy as Larry, but ask him to get involved? No, he was just you know, but his enjoyment was coming up and we have a lot of people like that.

TB: How lovely, yes.

JP: And we've got people who say, 'why can't more museum members be active?' and I've said well I think a lot of them are basically, that's what they get their kicks out of, just coming up here and enjoying what's going on and keeping themselves to themselves. You can't force people to do things and if that's their nature then so be it, that's just the way it goes.

[1:09:31.7]

TB: Yes, so clearly, you're given enormous amounts of pleasure to them?

JP: Well that's what I think it is, and we have disabled groups come up, there's one or two people that take the time to show round. Just recently we required a bus, a modern bus, in fact it was donated to us which actually has a kneeling you know at the front so you can push wheelchairs into it. Now, before that we were criticised because we really had no, if you came up here in a wheelchair you were stuck in the exhibition hall because you couldn't get round the site unless you were taken in the vehicle that you arrived in, we now have a bus which will be commissioned in the next few weeks which you can actually put several wheelchairs in and take them round as you would people who are looking at the museum. So we've recognised that disabled facilities are very important and we've addressed that so you know, we do get quite a few people with, you know disabled people coming up here it's something for them to do and we get old aged pensioner groups and various other people, you name it, not so many school, oh yes here's the thing. We used to get a lot of school visits, kids coming up, they don't come now because we don't have seatbelts.

TB: Oh really?

JP: And it's a nonsense because you go round on a bus at 10 miles an hour round the site and no, teachers won't allow it.

TB: Crikey, that's crazy.

JP: It is crazy, kid have to be, you know in the old days when you scraped your knee because you fell out of a tree or something your mother spanked you and that was it, you don't have that now, god mollycoddling.

[1:11:13.9]

TB: Gosh right so their parents fill out the health and safety sheet and they think oh well that's going to be a risk isn't it?

JP: We do get some but I think they're privately organised and they're certainly not local authority organised now but there you go.

[1:11:27.7]

TB: And just kind of, with some of the older people who actually rode on these buses, you've got some quite modern ones haven't you so probably quite young people as well.

JP: Yes, we try to cater for all ages.

TB: But there is something quite intense isn't there about actually getting in a bus and driving, it really does take you back to that time.

JP: A lot of people will bring their grandfather up and he worked on the buses and he was a driver or something and this poor old guy comes up and his eyes light up when he sees them, 'oh I remember driving that bus to so and so', you get a lot of that actually and that brings back memories and you know, again it's what people get out of it you know?

[1:12:06.5]

TB: And also, are buses tied up with place in anyway?

JP: Yes.

TB: Because I'm just thinking, like trains you had sort of liveries, didn't you? You had different paints for a start.

JP: Yes, I'm a great believer, probably more so than most that a bus has an impact in the area in which it operated and the colours it's in. Now we've got that St Helen's bus that you saw in the workshop, it's been here for many years, but it really belongs in St Helens you know. And there are buses that I see at museums down south, Alexander buses or Scottish buses and I think it'd be nice to have that back in Scotland you know. That's just me, some people say oh it's a Dennis or a particular type, they're not really interested that it came from the opposite end of the UK, to them it's the bus that they like, that's fine but I think from the public point of view, if people come up and they see buses that were running in this area 50, 60, 70 years ago that has a relevance but you know, it's just my...

[1:13:13.6]

TB: That's good because I suppose you know, if you went to a town the first thing that you'd notice is that there are different coloured buses there you know, that was a part of the towns identity wasn't it?

JP: Yes that's right, very much so, yes.

[1:13:24.9]

TB: And also, the routes they did, I mean clearly buses can move around of course they can to do lots of routes, but I'd imagine for most bus companies, would they run similar routes? I mean I guess you'd have those printed rolls wouldn't you with all the destinations on and so I suppose they'd do similar tracks?

JP: Yes you tend to find that buses would stay in a particular depot and they would - not every bus company - but a lot of bus companies would put the same bus out at the same time every day on the same route, you know and they would have the same drivers and conductors and the beauty of that was the driver got to know the bus, they'd look after it.

TB: I see, that's interesting, right.

JP: But then other companies, London Transport's particularly bad for shovelling buses around all over the place you know at the drop of the hat, it was just the way the operational thing went but...

[1:14:17.2]

TB: But that's interesting that staff might be attached to a bus and also a route.

JP: Oh yes, for smaller bus companies for instance and independent companies, a driver often would have a bus for years, the same bus and some bus companies, well some of the smaller companies within the Scottish Bus Group, in particularly places like Aberdeen and you know rural areas of Aberdeenshire and that sort of thing, it would be the same bus out and they maybe only had about 20 buses so they didn't have a great variety of vehicles.

[1:14:56.7]

TB: And also, the same passengers, right?

JP: Same passengers every day, yes.

TB: So, it's kind of like a mobile community isn't it, of sorts?

JP: Yes, when I travelled to school, I mean I would be on the same bus, I would see the same people and it would literally be the same bus and there was about a rota of maybe three or four conductors that worked the thing and you got to know them all and that was it, you know, it seemed it would go on forever.

[1:15:19.6]

TB: Yes, and particularly for rural areas I would imagine you know these really intense kind of experiences, I mean I remember getting on the school bus was brilliant because you'd meet all your friends and it was great fun you know, but for all the people too it must be the big social event for that day.

JP: For some people, some people maybe didn't feel that way at all but yes, I mean I suppose in a way that's maybe what started me off because it was meeting chums on the bus and

travelling on the bus with our mother and seeing people and chatting, you know there's a great social thing as well you know but I think a lot of people just see a bus as something that gets them from A to B and they're probably thinking about something totally different.

[1:16:02.7]

TB: Sure, yes. I once interviewed a guy that collected tram tickets and I said what's that about? And he said well the routes are really interesting because they're kind of historic and he said it was really hard to change a tram route or indeed a bus route because people complain about it you know, so often the stubs will link up I don't know, old industrial areas or old factories or something and they've long gone but the bus route still does that strange tour.

JP: I think less so now because a lot of bus services are grant supported by local authorities who are quick to realise that a bus is going nowhere that people want and the first thing they will do, people will complain and in this area particularly, the bus services change all the time and you think where does it go now, and I get a bus into Edinburgh or something and I'll think the 11:25, no it's some totally different time with a different route number you know? And so, there's a lot more change now than there was years ago but that's just the nature of the beast, I think.

[1:17:05.6]

TB: This is a quick question just on bus disposal, now trains all ended up in one kind of scrapyard you know?

JP: Dai Woodham's in Barry yes.

TB: Yes, clearly with buses that didn't happen, or did it, I don't know?

JP: Well there are a number of scrapyards concentrated throughout the country, the main one is actually in Barnsley, and Barnsley - maybe not so much now - but sort of back in the 60's, 70's, 80's there were about five or six or seven Barnsley dealers all cheap and well it was just a huge scrapyard as far as the eye could see and it was a mecca for people if you wanted to get spares for something or other that's where you'd go, and then there's been, there were one or two places in Scotland that were recognised as being the places to go to get stuff but of course now with all the legislation regarding disposal of waste oil and contaminants and all that sort of thing you have to be registered and you can't just open up a scrapyard in the middle of a field you know, there's all kinds of legislation.

TB: It's a lot more difficult.

JP: So, it's a lot more difficult.

[1:18:23.0]

TB: I see, so at these yards, they wouldn't be crushed they'd be left there and then you could pull parts off?

JP: Well yes there'd be a programme depending on how efficient the yard was, they would crush them or they would remove all the aluminium - because there's a lot of aluminium on buses - so the first thing they do is take all the aluminium off and recycle that and then the seats would be burnt and all the upholstery and everything so some yards were more efficient than others. The ones that weren't efficient were the best because you could find buses that were, had been there for years and the bits you wanted you know, there were one or two in particular that I remember, one in a place called Molesworth in Huntingdonshire and there were buses there, that had been there for 50 years and it was a real Mecca, we used to go down.

[1:19:17.3]

TB: Did you ever pick up whole buses from there?

JP: Yes.

TB: Oh, right ok.

JP: Yes, I've done that.

TB: Right, gosh.

JP: Over the years.

[1:19:24.9]

TB: And I mean now, if a big companies getting rid of a bus fleet would they pick up the phone to this museum or to the national body and say look these are going but we do have one, you know?

JP: Yes that does happen, we've had bus companies phoning up and say we're actually selling the last bus of a such and such or you know, now we have to be careful because if we accepted all the vehicles that were offered to us as donations, our cash flow would suffer because we need to try and have as many people, as many vehicle spaces basically paying so we have to be careful, but yes we get round it in various ways and it depends, we usually find that if they're offering a particular bus somebody would step forward and say oh I fancy that, so they take it on and they pay for it and that works, we've done that.

TB: Oh, I see, yes so, they sponsor it basically.

JP: But in the light of the fact that we are more or less full at the moment and there is a waiting list, it's very difficult to accommodate everything, we can't do that.

[1:20:36.0]

TB: Yes, when you've got the land, I mean clearly, it's going to be a big cost to put up another shed you know but have you thought about that?

JP: Yes, we've thought about that, we've actually looked at the possibility of doing that.

[1:20:47.2]

TB: But it could pay for itself if you have the waiting list?

JP: Yes, that's true, we have looked at that. There's been various initiatives which haven't come to fruition, we were going to build, in fact there's been a couple of things; the railway people took over at a time when if they hadn't we probably would have built something, there was a big shed on the other side of the gate here that we actually approached the owners to see if they would be prepared to sell it to us but that didn't come to anything, so yes.

[1:21:24.3]

TB: You didn't mention the railway people, so how did that come about? Because it sounds like they're a different organisation?

JP: They're a separate organisation but the reason it came about is because there was, originally on this site there was a network of railways and the, right up until the early 1970's and there are obviously railway buffs that know what's going on and they basically said to us look do you realise that you have an original running locomotive shed and there are railway sleepers all over the place, both here and on the other side of the site. And they approached us and said we would like to open up the railway shed which we weren't using so they stuck a locomotive in it and they've basically got track and they approached us with various initiatives, and we agreed that and various things. So we can take a run down and have a look but they've got a short stretch of line and they've got a brake van with a Hunslet diesel which runs up and down and takes people, and then we were offered a few years ago a narrow gauge railway which was being, it was a munitions railway down in Dumfriesshire and it was being basically sold off so we bought enough track and somebody, a couple of guys had narrow gauge locomotives and some co-wagons that had been converted into seats and what have you, so we run a wee sort of thing. That's being developed and it's actually going to go across the river and up round the back through the sort of undergrowth which will be very nice and up to the very top of the site so that's being developed at the

moment which will be quite an interesting attraction and that brings in a totally different load of people because people now are coming in who aren't really interested in buses at all, they're interested in railway, it brings more people in you know? So, nobody can say that we're not developing and creating more attractions you know.

TB: Yes that's wonderful, absolutely.

JP: And of course, having a site this size you know, it's limited only by peoples imagination because there's so much you can do. we'd hoped at one time to have trams running on the site and there was a group, who shall be nameless, when we approached them and they'd been often saying 'if only we had somewhere, we've got access to trams and equipment and everything else, if only we had somewhere to run trams', so we said 'right come and have a look, we could help you out'. They came over, 'this is wonderful', we never saw them again which is a shame because I would have liked to see trams.

TB: Yes that would be amazing.

JP: I don't know if you've been to Crich, the tram museum?

[1:24:21.6]

TB: I've never been to a tram museum but up at Covent Garden I've seen one actually.

JP: Well the mecca for a tram museum is Crich in Derbyshire and it's the national tram museum and it's, they have - god I don't know how many trams, well over 100 - and it's the mecca for trams, trams from everywhere.

TB: Yes, brilliant.

JP: It is, it really is.

[1:24:43.7]

TB: Last couple of questions, so well just sort of in a nutshell, could you just sort of say you know, why is it important to keep this museum kind of going, and you know why is it, what's the point of carrying it on, what's so brilliant about it?

JP: Well from a personal point of view I started it, I'd hate to see it fall down, you know it's something you, it's a stamp I suppose, and it gives a lot of pleasure to a lot of people. It also provides employment, well when I say employment, we must generate something to the local economy because people come up here and spend money here and yes, I mean it's an attraction and it would be a shame if, you know, it's something different for people to come and see. And a lot of people have put a lot of effort into this, it wouldn't just be me, that if it

shut tomorrow I think a lot of people would be devastated and ok, it's a small thing in a way but it's you know, I suppose it's my life's work really and a number of other people probably feel the same.

[1:25:59.6]

TB: I've got to say I don't think there's anything small about this place, it's enormous in every way.

JP: Yes in terms of...

TB: Yes only in terms of opening hours.

JP: But if it compares to the VNA we're small you know or even railway museums like Severn Valley or North York Moors you know, they're a real big business.

[1:26:21.4]

TB: Yes sure, ok last one; what's been the - if there's been one - but what's been the kind of highest point of your entire involvement with this project? What's been the best moment and what's been the lowest, the most difficult thing?

JP: I suppose the best thing really was getting the place in the first place and knowing that we'd signed on the dotted line and the place was ours and we'd moved in and just to go in and see all these huge sheds and think wow, this place has the most amazing potential, and I like to think that 25 years, 23 years on we've realised that potential, maybe not in the way that we envisaged it in the first place because a lot of things happened that we couldn't possibly foresee and at the time I remember thinking, you know have we bitten off more than we could chew and I don't think really at the end of the day I'm surprised because it's developed along the lines, it's developed and that's what's made it interesting because we didn't really envisage it would develop the way it has and there's been a lot of positive things. Yes, so now the lowest point...

[1:27:35.2]

TB: Yes so has there been a moment when you think god, I wish I'd never done this or?

JP: I suppose some of the lowest points actually from my personal point of view is where I've gone after vehicles that I've really wanted and they've been scrapped and that's happened a few times and I've been pretty pissed off about that because people have promised us vehicles, really iconic vehicles and there was a guy, there was a couple that had a really old pre-war Edinburgh bus that was converted into a caravan and we went to see it and it was absolutely beautiful inside and this couple were well into their 80's and they basically said

'look, we're going to give this up shortly', so we said right ok, we were allowed to take this and restore it back, wonderful. So, we exchanged details and everything else, never heard another thing and the next time we went back, somebody went back a few years later to see and it had gone.

TB: Oh, what a shame, yes.

JP: And that's happened once or twice, and I think that's probably the most off-pissing thing that I can imagine you know. But these are small things really and, in some respects, my own personal thing, I mean the vehicles I might have wanted to save aren't necessarily vehicles somebody else wanted to save but I don't think we've really had any major setbacks here in terms of you know, I mean we've really gone onwards and upwards from strength to strength really. I mean obviously there have been things along the way that have caught us out, but we've managed to get, we got by.

[1:29:18.6]

TB: You said that the way its developed has surprised you, so what's the surprise been? That it's expanded so fast or in terms of the numbers of buses you've got?

JP: Well if I'd had a vision of what we were going to be doing here when we first moved in and of course I was full of all kinds of ideas and looking back I think, I never thought we'd have a railway, I never thought we'd have that. I suppose that's the one area where I probably am surprised, I never thought that people would rise to the plate and sort of effectively, not only look after the infrastructure but enhance it in such a way, if you'd come here 20 years ago and you'd seen what was basically a derelict MoD site but one of the first things that happened was, the Scottish Business Awards, it was called SBAD - Scottish Business Awards, Annual Awards Trust and the two years after we moved in here Stagecoach were hosting it and Brian Souter came and saw us and said I'd like to have it here so they spend a fortune in landscaping and painting the big shed and they landscaped all at their cost. We had the Princess Royal here, we had dignitaries from all over the place for this lunch, they came up here on steam trains, we took a fleet of buses down to the station and picked them all up, that put us on the map and that was only a couple of years after we started and that was a highlight, that really was a highlight. So we got developed very quickly and that in a way was a catalyst for people to say oh yes that's been done, let's enhance on that now you know, so the site very quickly ceased to be looking derelict and started to look, I mean you see all the grass that's been planted over the years, you know that was all cinder you know, and flowerbeds and various things we could have done maybe more but what we've done certainly has enhanced the place.

[1:31:38.4]

TB: Yes lovely. There was one thing that I didn't ask was the name; The Scottish Vintage...

JP: Scottish Vintage Bus Museum. Right there is, yes ok.

[1:31:46.7]

TB: But it's, this has got a national scope hasn't it in terms of Scotland?

JP: Yes.

TB: And you could have called it, I don't know The Regional Bus Museum but just tell me...

JP: At the time there wasn't another bus museum and we thought right we are The Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, we agreed let's go for gold, let's call ourselves you know? And we are, well I suppose we are the definitive Scottish Vintage Bus Museum because we have buses mainly from Scotland but from all over Scotland and we have English buses as well, but you know, I think it's a good name that's stood the test of time.

TB: Yes.

JP: Maybe we should call it The Scottish Vintage Transport Museum now with or Rail and Bus Museum, but the railway people are quite happy just to stick with what we've got.

TB: Great, thank you so much Jasper that's brilliant.

Audio ends: [1:32:34.8]