

Ruth: My name is Ruth Benfield and I'm the great niece of Wesley Eaton. Wesley Eaton was the life partner of James McDougall and the two of them, along with James McDougall's twin brother Matthew, were the last private owners of Carisbrook. I'm here today having a chat with my mum, Leah Benfield. Mum married my father, Alan Benfield, back in 1959 and they celebrated their wedding breakfast at Carisbrook, so mum, what do you remember about the 2nd of November 1959?

Leah: Well, on the day we were married at the Chatswood registry office at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, and we had a family breakfast, family dinner

Ruth: How many people were there?

Leah: There were twelve people, close family...

Ruth: Who were they?

Leah: There were two McDougall brothers, my parents, my eldest sister and her husband, ah Bill and Joan Turner that's about...

Ruth: Was uncle Matty there?

Leah: Uncle Matty was there and Mrs McDougall, their mother as well.

Ruth: Mrs McDougall as well.

Leah: And we had a beautiful sit-down dinner, in, it was the dining room which is now the museum room.

Ruth: So that's the room closest to the back, near the kitchen which they are currently renovating?

Leah: Yes, and they had a big old fuel stove which Jimmy and Matty cooked the meal for all of us.

Ruth: And what did the meal consist of?

Leah: Well I'm pretty sure we started off with um... Pea and Lettuce soup ...

Ruth: Which is a James McDougall trait that one, I remember trying that one myself.

Leah: Yes, he made that quite often. Then we had the typical roast chicken dinner, which was pretty extraordinary for that 1959, beautifully done with all the vegetables. We had a wedding cake which we had as dessert; Jimmy had made the cake. He was very clever, cooked anything ..could do anything plain, round, white wedding cake with roses on the top and we sliced that up and everybody had a slice. That was basically dessert.

Ruth: So why was the decision made to have your reception at Carisbrook?

Leah: Um, we didn't want a big wedding we just needed the family there. My other sister had been married two weeks prior to that and we had another sister coming up to be married about a month after, so I elected just to have a very quiet family wedding which suited my husband and suited the family and off we went and did it.

Ruth: So, Uncle Jim did the cooking. Now, he was really well known for his cooking. I remember some of his yummy dishes. We even have a dish that we've named in his honour called "Chicken McDougall". How did that come about, Chicken McDougall?

Leah: That was at your christening, so that really wasn't to do with ... that was well past Carisbrook.

Ruth: But it was a creation by uncle Jim?

Leah: Yes, it was a creation of his yes.

Ruth: How did he create it?

Leah: Um, just by stretching food out in a typical Scotch manner, Scots manner, he'd be able to add to it and expand it out a little bit..

Ruth: What was involved in making Chicken McDougall?

Leah: So, started off with cooked chicken and then from that you added like shallots and bacon then yeah chickpeas anything you could...

Ruth: And soy sauce

Leah: And soy sauce and bacon and corn.

Ruth: So, he was very creative in the kitchen?

Leah: He was. Very.

Ruth: But I think more importantly was how creative he was in his trade as a Milliner. So, on the day you were married you were wearing his creation?

Leah: I wore a bow made of raffia. I wasn't dressed as a full bride. I had a short frock and he made me a beautiful raffia bow which went across my head and had a very short little dotty veil just across my eyes. He made that for me.

Ruth: And I think he made a few other hats and apparel and things for you over the years ...

Leah: Yes, he did. He made the hat I wore for my daughter's christening. He also made my niece Robyn's wedding hat and her flower girl and bridesmaids - just beautiful coils of stitched ribbon all twisted round their beautiful hair. He did quite a bit. He made hats for his mother and actually, Matty and Jimmy used to make their mother's dresses.

Ruth: Really?

Leah: Yes.

Ruth: So, what? they had like a little sewing room or

Leah: No, they did them in King Street in their salon.

Ruth: Ok, so King Street was where their milliner's business was there?

Leah: The millinery business was there...and they made hats for all the wealthy ladies on the Eastern Suburbs going to the races. They made hats for the Governor General's wife, 'lady so and so', all well-known people, and they had....everybody had their own personal block for their hat, for their head size.

Ruth: So, you'd go into the shop and you'd see all the different blocks all lined up?
I remember I went in there once when I was in my 20's, and I was intending to go say hello to uncle Jim and I'll never remember feeling so embarrassed when I I was probably there for about 10-15 minutes and having a chat to him and suddenly realised it wasn't uncle Jim it was uncle Matty - they were so alike weren't they?

Leah: Yes, very much alike.

Ruth: Physically looking similar, but you were telling me that personality-wise not so similar.

Leah: Two different personalities. Matty was more reserved, Jimmy was a bit of a villain.

Ruth: How so? What did he get up to?

Leah: Ah, he loved practical jokes and he loved to have his Scotch and salute you with it "*Slàinte mhath!*" he used to say.

Ruth: I do remember him turning up pretty much every Christmas morning into my 20's, in the 1980's and so on, to pick up his bottle of Johnnie Walker.

Leah: Yes, we always gave him a bottle of Johnnie Walker on Christmas time. One Christmas he made me a money tree, it was made out of 5 dollar... no made out of 1 dollar notes, and I put it on the windowsill thinking it was a piece of art not realising, when I looked closely, it were 1 dollar notes folded into little flowers, and in the centre were 50 cent coins and this was just I wish I had a photo of it ..

Ruth: I remember the money tree. I think it was in my bedroom for a while.

Leah: Yes, but the moths finished up eating it!

Ruth: I know that uncle Jim was mostly responsible for the decor and decorations in Carisbrook, and also at Hunters Hill. Where did he get all the decor and bits and pieces that he used to make the place look fabulous?

Leah: A lot of the things came from an auctioneer's room in Neutral Bay. Thursday night used to be viewing. Uncle Wes and Jimmy would go out Thursday night, they'd get their number for the auction which took place the next day 'round about 1:00 o'clock. Uncle Wes would leave the shop, take the truck out - the company truck - and a lot of the furniture was bought there, a lot of glassware.....

Ruth: and you still have some glassware that we've inherited from them?

Leah: I do. I have some of the glassware. I also have a pair of fighting cocks that they bought at auction.

Ruth: So, the brass fighting cocks that we still have.

Leah: We still have those. They were bought out of Neutral Bay auction. He used to always go out there and they used to collect glass grapes, and they bought all the glass grapes. They had a great big bowl full of them so Matty and Jimmy decided they would make a display in a really heavy lead vase type thing and they made a beautiful bowl of glass grapes made out of all the little bits of glass they could possibly find.

Ruth: You've always said it was Venetian glass. Is that the case?

Leah: Some of it's Venetian glass, some of it is just beading type glass. There's beads in there, there's little leaves,

Ruth:copper wire like grape vines...

Leah: Yes, bounded all together.

Ruth: Yes

Leah: and I have that as well. That used to be in Carisbrook and later on in Hunters Hill.

Ruth: Where was it in Carisbrook?

Leah: In Carisbrook it was in the lounge room.

Ruth: Right. What, on the dining table or....?

Leah: No, it wasn't on the dining table it was on the sideboard.

Ruth: Yeah, it's beautiful, and it's one of our most treasured possessions.

Leah: Absolutely. Yes.

Ruth: and then I've included in the report two photos: one of 'The Macaroni Tree' as we called it and the other one has to do with milk bottle tops, I believe. But could you describe the Macaroni Tree first of all, because you saw them making it.

Leah: Well the Macaroni Tree, it's made out of glass beads which is the top of the tree...

Ruth: So, they look like buttons.

Leah: yes, they're not beads, they're glass beads and buttons. The beads hold the buttons on.

Ruth: So, like little sugar beads weren't they?

Leah: Yes, yes, and then it's got a Plaster of Paris trunk.

Ruth: So, who designed that one?

Leah: Matty and Jimmy both did this ...and then sprinkled all over the bottom is macaroni.

Ruth: But you said you saw them making it.

Leah: I did.

Ruth: Well what was the process?

Leah: Well, it was hanging on the clothesline. A sheet of material like upholsters material, and they used to sit down and just stitch the buttons and the beads on.

Ruth: A bit like beading.... a dress?

Leah: They could have been. They were beaders, they did... they could do anything that was arty. And then finally when they had it all together, they poured cold coffee all over the fabric from above.

Ruth: ... while it was on the clothesline?

Leah: Yeah, while it was on the clothesline, and that presented the colour.

Ruth: So, that's why it's all brown and stained.

Leah: This is why it's looking brown and stained. I always called it a 'Raintree'. I don't think they meant it to be a Raintree, but I called the Raintree.

Ruth: Yeah and so the macaroni on the bottom was something that a friend of mine used to pick off and eat when we were kids...

Leah: Yes, she used to come along and pick it off and eat it, as children do.

Ruth: So hence 'The Macaroni Tree'.

Leah: That's correct

Ruth: And then the other piece of artwork that we had is the one that's made out of cream bottle tops.

Leah: Yes, it's a sheet of fabric put on a board and they used to get cream, fresh cream, in the little tiny squatty glass jars and Jimmy used to take all the tops off and make them into little flowers.

Ruth: Is that the original colour of the

Leah: That's the original colour of the cream tops.

Ruth: So, they haven't painted them gold?

Leah: No, they haven't. And then he's used the same Plaster of Paris. It's like a twig, and it runs across the wall and that was made for me by Jimmy and Matty.

Ruth: What for?

Leah: I...I can't remember, I think it was a Christmas. Not sure what it was for.

Ruth: And sadly, we don't know where that is anymore.

Leah: No, we don't.

Ruth: And the money tree, I think, got thrown out. Oh, ...not the money tree, the macaroni tree.

Leah: The macaroni tree ...eventually everything started to eat it because it was food.

Ruth: Yeah, and we disassembled the money tree and I think you've still got the mint condition 1 dollar notes?

Leah: Yes, I have. Yes.

Ruth: Except they're all folded and have ..

Leah: They have holes in them where the needle went through.

Ruth: But similarly, uncle Matty as well was equally as skilled in the millinery trade would you say one was more skilled than the other? or ...?

Leah: No, I would say they were equal because before they were milliners, when they came.... when the war was over both served in New Guinea in the Australian army.

Ruth: So, let's just stop there and talk about their early life then, OK, so where were they born?

Leah: Ah, they were born in Ayreshire in Scotland.

Ruth: OK, and then they came out here as kids?

Leah: They came out here on a ship apparently, with their parents, on a ship and went to Brisbane where Jimmy and Matty went to Ipswich grammar.

Ruth: Ok, and we know that because you've got some...

Leah: old boys.....

Ruth: After uncle Jim passed away you kept receiving old boy's newsletters from Ipswich Grammar so that's how we yes, that's how we know they went there... and so, they must have moved to Sydney at some point after the war?

Leah: After the war yes, I'm pretty sure that they had worked as window dressers in Anthony Hordern's in Sydney and from there they went after the war I believe that they were sent off to do some kind of apprenticeship and they both chose to do millinery.

Ruth: OK so this came after the war.... interesting...

Leah: After the war ...

Ruth: And you said they served in New Guinea?

Leah: They served in New Guinea.

Ruth: Representing the Australian Army?

Leah: Yes, yes...

Ruth: Ok, and did uncle Jim ever share any recollections of that?

Leah: No, no...

Ruth: No, I think many people who have been to war tend to not want to...

Leah: ...and that's when uncle Wes met Jimmy.

Ruth: Ok, so this is where our family makes the connectionso uncle Wes met uncle Jim

Leah:after the war.

Ruth: So, what 1945?

Leah: Later, I'd say.

Ruth: A bit later

Ruth: Ok, and so they well didn't go into business obviously because uncle Wes was running the shoe repair shop in Crows Nest which is our family's business, or was back then. So, the shoe repair shop in the arcade in Crows Nest, which is still there, um not owned by us any longer, but that was Wesley Eaton's family's business and that's where you met dad.

Leah: I went there to work as a 16 year old and I met Alan, Wesley Eaton's nephew, and the rest is history.

Ruth: as they say

Leah: Yes.

Ruth: So, let's take the conversation back to Carisbrook, the house itself. What's your first memory of Carisbrook?

Leah: Well, it was a Sunday I'm pretty sure because we all worked in the shop on Saturday..half a day

Ruth: This is the shoe repair shop?

Leah: The shoe repair shop. Then Sunday we'd all pack sandwiches and go down to Carisbrook. Jimmy and uncle Wes were living on site.

Ruth: So, they were living there the whole time the renovations were happening?

Leah: Yes, they were.

Ruth: Now, what was the state of the house like when they first moved in?

Leah: The house wasn't too bad. It was slightly overgrown in the toilet off one of the bedrooms, there were vines growing up the toilet

Ruth: Up through the toilet? Through the cistern right.

Leah: Up through the toilet right it was pretty dusty and peeling paint.

Ruth: And so there hadn't been anybody living there?

Leah: They bought it empty I'm pretty sure of that, but the main work was so overgrown outside

Ruth: Yeah and I got a shock when we saw that photo of uncle Jim, but the photos actually at Carisbrook, um of the amount of bushes and...

Leah: Yes, overgrowth and it was just everywhere right down to the river.

Ruth: OK so they had to basically landscape ...

Leah: They had to clear and actually on clearing some they found little flat plateaus where garden walks had been. Some of it was already paved and the rest was just dirt so bit by bit as they finally walked, you know, got down to the river, down to the river it started to take shape.

Ruth: Right, ok, but they terraced and put in a lot of garden?

Leah: They did they did.

Ruth: Particularly the brick paving which looked very much like the brick paving at Hunters Hill which is where they moved to when they moved from Carisbrook.

Leah: They bought tonnes and tonnes of bricks, second-hand bricks, they had a friend who was a stonemason, Tony Bakerovich was his name he came to their attention and he came down and guided them how to cut and chop the stone, the sandstone.

Ruth: So, it wasn't unusual for you to pack up some lunch and go there of a Sunday and help out?

Leah: A lot of us went a lot of the family went, clearing things, just generally doing anything that we could to make.... to make it clear and....

Ruth: It was a lot of work!

Leah: clean a lot of work to be done.

Ruth: So how long do you think this went on for?

Leah: I would say up until my wedding, it was pretty much under control in '59, 1959 so it would have been a couple of years.

Ruth: You don't know exactly when they bought Carisbrook?

Leah: No, I don't, no.

Ruth: But I'm sure there's documentation existing about you know land titles and that sort of thing ... but it was before you met dad?

Leah: Ah no, no I was working at the shop...

Ruth: Yeah, but you're only a young girl then and probably completely oblivious to all this sort of stuff that was happening.

Leah: I remember when they purchased it. I remember being told that they'd bought it and I had no idea what Carisbrook was, or where it wasand just going down there and seeing ... "Oh my God how are they going to clear this!?"

Ruth: So, where were they living before Carisbrook?

Leah: Before Carisbrook they were living in Phillip St, in Selborne Chambers, in the city.

Ruth: In the city... that's up near the legal part of town?

Leah: Yes, so that Jimmy and Matty could just walk down to King Street to the salon and uncle Wes used to come in his car to Crows Nest.

Ruth: So, they the three of them lived in an apartment there?

Leah: No ..um, Matty lived with his mother.

Ruth: In Selborne chambers?

Leah: Yes, they had it ..they had an apartment there as well.

Ruth: OK, so they kind of were living next door to each other.

Leah: They were.

Ruth: They always did yes

Leah: And that's how they all ended up at Carisbrook.

Ruth: Yeah but also when they moved from Carisbrook up to Hunters Hill which is the residence that we inherited ultimately from uncle Jim....

Leah: Right

Ruth:they'd always lived together side by side.

Leah: They did, always together, yes.

Ruth: So, what other memories do you have of events and fun times at Carisbrook in the late 1950s?

Leah: Well, I can remember the first time we had a New Year's Eve party at Carisbrook because on the 31st of December it's also Jimmy and Matty McDougall's birthday on New Year's Eve.

Ruth: A double celebration!

Leah: Double celebration and not only New Year's Eve, Hogmanay.

Ruth: Which is the traditional Scottish New Years’

Leah: Yes, so the table would be set up in the hallway...

Ruth: In the central hallway?

Leah: ...right down the hallway, completely set up with drinks and glasses.

Ruth: How many people were there?

Leah: Oh, there’d be dozens of people probably 20-30 friends, not neighbours they didn't know many people at the time, family, friends, a lot of chaps from television a lot of young people from the ballet.

Ruth: So, Uncle Wes and uncle Jim had a particularly strong connection with the ballet scene in Sydney at the time?

Leah: Yes, they did, they held a season’s ticket which was for three people and I was the third!

Ruth: I'm so jealous ... I would love to have gone to the ballet with them.

Leah: I went, I went with them most times.

Ruth: What did you see?

Leah: I saw everything: Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty...

Ruth: Any highlights?

Leah: Everything, and I did meet Sir Robert Helpmann one night, introduced to me by Jimmy McDougall.

Ruth: Right, so they had good connections with the ballet.

Leah: Good connections with the ballet.

Ruth: Didn’t you see Margot Fonteyn and Rudolph Nureyev?

Leah: I did, I saw Margot Fonteyn Rudolph and Don Quixote.

Ruth: So, essentially you were living the life of Eliza Doolittle, weren't you?

Leah: Yes! you could say that.

Ruth: You were what? 19 or 20?

Leah: I probably would've been yeah well, I was 19.

Ruth: Born and raised in Campsie, made a very big connection with these fabulous McDougalls and Eatons

Leah: And one of 8 children.

Ruth: And you were one of eight children as well, so you felt particularly spoiled.

Leah: Yes, I did feel a little bit like Eliza Doolittle.

Ruth: Sounds like they enjoyed spoiling you too.

Leah: Yes, they did.

Ruth: So, your memories of New Year's Eve....

Leah: Yes, so we'd all sit down, we have food ...we never had haggis she never made haggis for us.

Ruth: Who? Mrs Mac?

Leah: It always a threat that haggis was going to be made and I'm saying "I'm not going, I don't want to eat haggis!" but we sat there, we had drinks and then at midnight Mr McDougall was alive then, their father, he used to sit at the head of the table with his bottle of Scotch.....

Ruth: Right

Leah:loving it, and 'round about midnight we'd sing "Happy Birthday" for Jimmy and Matty then we'd all sing "Auld Lang Syne".

Ruth: Absolutely.

Leah: And then into the big lounge room which had a grand piano in there, and uncle Wes used to play the piano and we'd sing for hours and hours and hours and the table that we sat on on New Year's Eve had been set up on Christmas earlier, and in the lounge room they had a great big Santa Claus' backside with his boots hanging out and as though he's climbing up the chimney, that was in the fireplace in lounge room..

Ruth: So, that's in the front room I remember you showing it to me yeah... and was there a Christmas tree as well?

Leah: No, just beautiful decorations all made by Jimmy and Matty draped over the archways in the hall and pretty lights and candelabra and candles

Ruth: Did you spend a lot of time outside when you were partying at Christmas and New Year's? because they'd done so much work on the garden outside, did they have like Hawaiian candles or flares?

Leah: No, I can't recall there ever being flares ... I know we did sit outside one night on the back veranda, which by the way...near the wall there near the entrance to the hallway used to be hanging a pair of manacles.

Ruth: What do you mean?

Leah: They were actually convict manacles that they had found in the garden, and I'm wondering if they're still hanging on that wall down there, because I didn't look the last time I was there.

Ruth: Oh well, somebody might know where they are or have them stored away somewhere. What, it was chains and manacles like ...

Leah: No, it was just two like cuffs, two metal cuffs with a chain between.

Ruth: And what? someone dug them up when they

Leah: Somebody dug them up, one of the men dug them up during the gardening process.

Ruth: Somebody might know where they are down at Carisbrook.

Leah: Yes, they could do.

Ruth: So, the McDougall brothers were true Scotsman. Uncle Jim loved his Johnnie Walker, but uncle Matty was into Scottish dancing

Leah: Yes, Matty belonged to a Scottish Dancing association, and he used to compete in Scotland. He went over to Scotland quite a few times. Also, because when he got to Scotland, he could see his cousins in Ayreshire and competed in Scottish dancing with his friend Maurice who was also a Scottish dancer. I never did see him dance but I did see his tartan skirt and everything ...

Ruth: His kilts.

Leah: And kilt. And then one year he bought me back a whole length of Royal Stewart red tartan which I had made into a skirt, but not pleated skirt, and a little vest, just in memory of... a beautiful piece of red wool it was just gorgeous.

Ruth: And what are your memories of Mrs Mac? I have vague memories of Mrs Mac. She was a very old lady in my mind's eye. I remember she used to give me those little penny shaped caramels when she was sitting out the back of Hunters Hill. What's your memories of Mrs Mac?

Leah: Mrs Mac was a very broad Scottish gentle lady, very patient, she was a little bit mean...

Ruth: like, ...stingy mean?

Leah: stingy mean yeah, not mean to people!

Ruth: in the true Scottish sense...

Leah: And she had a cat that used to sit on her lap. On Saturday afternoons she used to watch "Ringside at the Wrestling", and she believed wholeheartedly that this was all true. And we used to say it's not and she used to be hissing the villain and almost strangling the cat the cat's name was Mehitabel ... Mehitabel the cat.

Ruth: So, Mrs Mac basically lived with Uncle Jimmy and Uncle Matty after her husband died?

Leah: After old Mr Mac died, Mrs McDougall and Matty came to Carisbrook, and they lived in what I think now is where the caretaker lives - in that side section and that was ...Matty and his mum lived there.

Ruth: Yep, and so they looked after her as dutiful sons.

Leah: They looked after her and they went, she went on to live in Hunters Hill with Matty and Jimmy and Wesey when they all moved over and bought the two semis.

Ruth: Yep, when they moved out of Carisbrook

Leah: Yes.

Ruth: OK. Now, when I was a kid you used to freak me out, telling me about a poltergeist in Carisbrook and to be honest, even now when I drive past Carisbrook, the first thing I think about is the story of the poltergeistwhat ..? tell me..

Leah: Well, they used to say that there's like a linen closet in the hallway, off the hallway, it's just a little ...it's like a... a pantry kind of room.

Ruth: Yes, so when we visited there recently you showed me.

Leah: I did. I showed you where the door was

Ruth: There's crockery and stuff in there currently.

Leah: And occasionally Uncle Wes and Jimmy would say that things came flying out of that room.

Ruth: So how? what? what? how?

Leah: Like, just came out! like face flannels and towels and ...

Ruth: Just flew out?

Leah: Just flew out the door.

Ruth: Was the door open?

Leah: If the door was open. So, my uncle Wes decided it was time to have a Medium come down there and the Medium came, and he said to them 'it's a poltergeist'.

Ruth: Right.

Leah: Now, the poltergeist is supposed to be the spirit of a child. And he claimed that there had been a child that was drowned in what was then called the well. Which is still there, but I don't think it's called a well anymore...

Ruth: No, it's just the water source for

Leah: So, you know, was this all hearsay? were they meant to frighten me? I'm not sure...

Ruth: Well this is it. Were they pulling your leg?

Leah: Were they pulling my leg?

Ruth: Seems like a huge length to go to just to have a bit of a joke on a ...

Leah: Yes, yes. So, anybody that lives there, if you see anything strange... might be the poltergeist!

Ruth: but Uncle Wes was very into all of that. I remember you telling me he was a member of the Theosophist society

Leah: He was.

Ruth: And he was very much into spirit...

Leah: He had a huge belief in the after world.

Ruth: Yes, and has he ever contacted you?

Leah: He's never contacted me since he died.

Ruth: I wish he'd come and say hi to me. I'd love to meet him!

Ruth: So, Uncle Jim and Uncle Matty and Uncle Wes spent a lot of money and a lot of time fixing up Carisbrook only to ultimately have to move out. What happened?

Leah: I believe the main roads department wanted to widen the road.

Ruth: So, this is Burns Bay road?

Leah: This is Burns Bay road. And I'm pretty sure that Lane Cove Council stepped in and purchased the property to save it historically, and from that point on they sold up and went to Hunters Hill where they bought a pair of semis.

Ruth: So, that's 65 and 67 Woolwich Rd – which is... ultimately one of the properties that we inherited. So how did that all work out in the end? because uncle Wes of course, being a bachelor, didn't have any kids and so was the idea that we would inherit what uncle Wes left to dad?

Leah: Yes, well Alan, my husband, was uncle Wes' nephew, and he passed away first.

Ruth: What happened with uncle Wes?

Leah: Uncle Wes had leukaemia...

Ruth: Oh, so when he passed away where were they living?

Leah: Well, they Jimmy and Matty Jimmy and uncle Wes lived in 67 side and Matty and Mrs McDougall lived in 65.

Ruth: On Woolwich Rd?

Leah: On Woolwich Rd, two semis.

Ruth: So, they moved out of Carisbrook and they bought a pair of semis - one side was for Uncle Jim and Uncle Wes and the other side was for Matty and Mrs Mac.

Leah: And when uncle Wes died, Jimmy sold 67 and moved into 65 with his mother and brother. And then when Jimmy died it was left to my husband, Alan Benfield, and myself and our daughter Ruth.

Ruth: So, uncle Wes kind of arranged with uncle Jim that we would ultimately inherit the property.

Leah: Yes

Ruth: And so really, you know, uncle Jim didn't need to do that for us although he had no family and children either but it was really just because they were our uncles, and uncle Jim promised uncle Wes that that he would leave that property to us...

Leah: That's what happened.

Ruth: Yes, so you know, if some things hadn't happened, we may well have inherited Carisbrook!

Leah: We may have if they had lived long enough, and lived there, and hadn't wanted to widen the road we could have inherited Carisbrook.

Ruth: Yep, but I don't know that we would have been able to afford the upkeep somehow!

Leah: Possibly not we but we would have looked after it pretty well.

Ruth: Absolutely yes yep.

Ruth: So, they all moved from Carisbrook to Hunters Hill and not long after that, uncle Wes was diagnosed with leukaemia.

Leah: Yes.

Ruth: So, he died in 19.....

Leah: 67, 68

Ruth: So, I was still only little.

Leah: 68 it was.

Ruth: And then uncle Jim sold one side of the semi and moved in with uncle Matty and Mrs Mac.

Leah: Yes.

Ruth: Yes, so then Mrs Mac was probably the next one to pass away.

Leah: Mrs Mac passed away a few years later.

Ruth: Can you remember how old I was?

Leah: You were at the time about five because we had gone down to see Jimmy one Saturday afternoon and Mrs Mac was making us a cup of tea and she said to you "how old are you Ruth?" and you said "I'm five" and then you said to her "how old are you?" and she said "I'm 90" and you said "you'll bust!"

Ruth: I hope she had a good sense of humour!?

Leah: She did. She roared with laughter.

Ruth: So, I think one of the most interesting things about the McDougall brothers' story is the way they passed away. I know uncle Matty went first, so can you tell us a little bit about the circumstances around their deaths?

Leah: Yes, well Matty had gone to Scotland to dance in a competition of Highland dancing, and he had cousins there of course, and stayed with his cousins in Ayresshire.

Ruth: In Ayresshire.

Leah: Yes, and then he, on his way back to Australia, he thought he might go and sail up the Nile. So, he got to Heathrow airport and he had a massive heart attack, and they couldn't revive him. So, Jimmy was notified Jimmy was notified and said to the cousins "please bury him in Ayresshire".

Ruth: That's sad. What a shock for Uncle Jim.

Leah: A very big shock. So, he's... he was buried in Ayresshire. Jimmy never went over ...

Ruth: for the funeral.

Leah: No to the funeral. Jimmy stayed here and two years later, Jimmy said "I will go to Ayresshire and visit my twin brothers grave". He went. He saw all his cousins. Had a good old time with them, came back to Heathrow airport. He had a massive heart attack and died.

Ruth: In the airport, same as uncle Matty.

Leah: In the airport. Exactly the same thing.

Ruth: So how did you find out about Uncle Jim's death?

Leah: His friend Heather, who was a very close friend and also his attorney, notified us. She rang. I was at work. She rang, she said "Jimmy has passed away at Heathrow airport" and I went "no, you mean Matty" ... she went "No....."

Ruth: She knew the story about uncle Matty?

Leah: She knew the story about uncle Matt as well. So, Jimmy's cousins buried him, alongside his twin brother in Ayreshire.

Ruth: So, they're both buried together over in Ayreshire

Leah: They're both buried together.

Ruth: I drive past Carisbrook a lot and of course every time I drive past, I think of our family connection to the place. The fact that you had your wedding breakfast there, you know, the fact that uncle Jim and uncle Wes spent a lot of time and money renovating the place. And we've been there maybe once or twice that I can remember, but most recently went there and had a lovely afternoon tea, and the members of the Historical Society were so excited that you were there, and they showed us a couple of hats that uncle Jim had made. Why is it important to you that we, we document your memories?

Leah: Well, I'm 83 now. You're the last of the line of the family that I've told this story to, and I'd just like people to know that our part in Carisbrook was during the 50's and how we loved everything about it, and all the reconstruction and work that was done and having witnessed it.
Thank you.