

## NELSON, 22 JULY 2016

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Tell me about the cottage?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Do you remember what his name was?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ I guess I'm interested in both the history of Nelson at that time and also in the 1970s.

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ How did you first become interested in weaving?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ What year was that when you first came out to New Zealand?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ And at that stage was there other hand-weaving going on in New Zealand?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ So for you with your weaving, did you always consider it more art than craft?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ So did you mostly sell from home?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ And would you source your materials locally?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ And what kind of materials were you mostly weaving with at that stage?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Can you tell me about how the Nelson Polytechnic course came about?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Had you already been weaving for quite a while at that stage?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ And apart from learning from Anna, where else did you learn from?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Where were those students coming from?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ What was the reason that it had to stop at that point?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Not really.

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ I wanted to learn the technique so I went and found people at the Wellington Guild, Port Nicholson...

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Who could teach me that and get me started...

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ I do know her. She hasn't taught me much, but I ask her questions and things.

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ We started off talking about how Philippa first became interested in weaving, so I'll ask you that as well...

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ What made them superior? Was it their knowledge of technique or had they been doing it for a long time?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Was the Nelson course more focused on technique or on artistic expression?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Nola, what was your preferred type of weaving?

**A** \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have any insights as to why the seventies might have been such a boom for weaving?

## ANNIE MACKENZIE TALKS TO PHILIPPA VINE & NOLA FOURNIER

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Well this cottage was built in 1853 so it's pretty old – one of the oldest cottages in The Brook, it's a scheduled cottage and so is the one next door. And they were probably built around the same time. But this cottage was built by a man who came out from Gloucestershire to be with his friend and fellow weaver, Thomas Blick. Thomas Blick actually brought him out here.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I've got all this down here; I can never remember all this, but there was an awful lot of cloth weaving going on in Nelson actually in the early times... Are you interested in the history of weaving around this area?

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, because there was a big growth of that sort of thing in the 1970s.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ I really became interested in weaving because I knew I was coming out to New Zealand and I knew there was lots of wool in New Zealand and I took a spinning course in London, where we were living at the time. So when I came out here I was all ready to have sheep and get set up to be a spinner, not so much a weaver at that time.

But then a friend of mine had an autoharp that... sorry, I've done this wrong. A friend of mine wanted to swap a table loom for an autoharp that I had, you see, so I had this table loom and knew nothing about it. At the same time a family who we knew a little bit about, from England came out and one of the aunts in this family was a weaver, a professional weaver and her name was Nancy Mason and you come across Nancy's name in the early annals of weaving in Nelson. She actually taught lots of people, including Bill, including how to make fleeces rugs and things like that. She was very keen on using natural things. She went back to England, leaving two looms in Nelson. She didn't have anywhere to store them so her sister suggested that I have them because we had a pottery at the time and plenty of room in the pottery cottages so that's how I started off. I was actually given a loom to use, a big loom, an upright loom, and I was very, very keen on rya rugs, knotted rugs, so that's what I did. I sort of more or less taught myself at that time. At the same time, there were a lot of other things going on in Nelson, which I can tell you about.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ The year that I first started weaving was... Oh, we came out in about 1964, so about 1968 or 1969. I'm sorry I can't tell you the exact date.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, a little bit in Auckland, and a little bit in Canterbury too, but it was more to do with art, than craft then. It wasn't so much concentrating on the craft, it was more to do with art... and actually in about 1968, I started to exhibit at the CSA Gallery in Christchurch with another group of textile workers. And that was the first time that weaving had been shown in art galleries in New Zealand... You know that the Craft is regarded differently? But we were an off-shoot of The Group in Christchurch and people like Olivia Spencer-Bower, (a very well-known Christchurch painter) was one of our patrons and she bought my rugs and so I was very excited.

But in Auckland, there were also some people who had trained as painters or designers and they took up textile art and that was mostly tapestry weaving. I think.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Not really, because you see one of the things was that I had also been trained as a potter – though not a very good one – but my first husband, Christopher, was a potter, a very good potter, and we had a pottery out at Bal Valley in Nelson. That was when I first met Christine actually, because she was very friendly with the schoolmaster's wife out at Hira and we often used to sit in Judy's kitchen and talk about things – you were probably there, running around somewhere... So actually I've always regarded my weaving as a job. I've always wanted to make a profit from it, you know. I mean I like the idea of "art" and "craft", but I also think that it's very good if you're a crafts person if you can refine it down so that you can actually make money out of it. And I was so lucky because we had the pottery and we had people coming, people would look at my rugs and buy them... you know I never had any trouble selling things.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, from the pottery. But sometimes in exhibitions. But there was quite a lot going on, a lot of things like vegetable dyeing and that sort of thing. We used to have these picnics where we'd go to the beach and have a big copper and fire and everything and it was quite lovely actually, that time. Lots of people were involved.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes... if we could.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ I was mostly weaving with either natural wool or carpet wool. I've always been very interested in colour so I have always done a lot of dyeing, my own dyeing, but I've also used a lot of commercial wools because, you know, people always said, "Oh, natural dyes are wonderful, their lovely subtle colours, but they fade." It's very hard to get a natural dye that doesn't fade. They fade beautifully but, you know, you have to think about that.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ That is on to a completely different era of weaving. When we came out and lived in Nelson, in the early 1970s, another family came out from England who were part of a commune that we were going to set up and have our own school up in the valley. It never came off the ground for various reasons: because people were too cussed and too rugged individuals but one of the things that happened was that this German lady, Anna Correa-Hunt, was a part of this family and she wanted very much to have a craft-oriented workshop as part of a commune and train other people. And she was a very interesting character. She was very pig-headed, but she got things done. She was really difficult. I worked with her for years and I think it took years off my life really. She was a friend of mine and you had to admire her because she battered at the Polytech until they got some – I don't know how long the first weaving classes were (Nola can tell you because I think she was part of that). We had something called "The Hand Loom Weaving Certificate", that was for people who had done a bit of weaving already and Anna wanted to make this into like a professional qualification and so Polytech took this on and we used to go away to various places and look at wool and materials and then we would come back and have a week of lectures at Polytech and we would have projects that we had to do. And that went on for quite a lot of years and that included a lot of people from outside Nelson because we all knew what a wonderful... Well, she wasn't a wonderful teacher, exactly, but she knew an awful lot. She had been brought up in her aunt's weaving studio and she always said, if any of the bobbins she wound were not correct, her aunt would throw them across the room at her. She was a lovely person to be with in that she had lots of anecdotes, she was a real character, but she didn't really get on very well with the Polytech hierarchy. She was too determined and too outspoken, I think, but she made a lot of difference to the status of weaving in New Zealand because she had much more sophisticated techniques, like warping with paddles and lots and lots of strands in the warp and that sort of thing. We all learnt lots of things...

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ I'd been weaving rugs, not cloth. She was a cloth weaver, Anna. I'm everything, because I've learnt everything because I had to teach it and I always wanted to know what I was teaching people.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ From books. Not so much other weavers, but I was always very good at finding things out from books.

So Anna was teaching, then Anna got permission to run a year's course at the Polytech, a full-time course and she was teaching that course and then she went away to England or Germany or somewhere and – this is where I'm not quite sure of my dates, Nola might know... She left me partly in charge of what was going on at the Polytech so I took over with another person who Anna had trained. We taught this weaving course and when she came back, she had a big row with the Polytech people and so they asked me if I would supervise the course, which of course wasn't very politic really! But then we had the weaving diploma, which was a two year course and was quite sophisticated. And we picked and chose who we would have on that course. We usually had to pick from about thirty to thirty-five people, we had to pick fifteen, fifteen in the course every year and they mostly went on for two years and graduated.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ All over the place. Some came from overseas even – Australia. There wasn't anything else like it you see, in New Zealand or Australia, at that time. That would've been... I have to work this out... I met Bill in '76, so it must've started around 1976 and it went on until... My last involvement with it was in 1993 and I decided I'd had enough teaching, I wanted to get on with my own work so I left. But that finished the weaving course, it was over then.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Because the Polytech wanted to turn it into a sort of craft design course, Do you know the story of the...

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ You know how things go on and then somebody has a really bright idea and then they think, "It would be much better if we do it this way." Well, that was really what happened. And all over New Zealand they set up these craft... They were called "Craft Design Courses". And it's true that before that they hadn't put much emphasis on design and there were ways in which these new courses made things much more connected with drawing and design and that sort of thing. Colour theory. But, it wasn't the same as having a craft course. And I used to have these Craft Design students on a Friday afternoon and it was like having a nursery group or something you know. You set up the table looms with a very simple warp and they'd come and they'd weave it. There was no calculation, nothing. Now I wonder what your training has been?

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, there were a lot of people in Wellington.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Did you work with Brigit Howitt at all?

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ We used to have quite a lot of guest tutors. She was one of our guest tutors and so was Kate Wells, the tapestry weaver. She was a lot younger and was a wonderful weaver and wonderful knitter. She wove very good tapestries. And we used to have people like that come. And people from Australia as well. Quite a few people from Australia to give courses. You see people would come into the Polytech courses for say just a week for a course with Mary Beeston or something like that. We had a very high standard.

But the Craft Design [Course]... the feeling was that weaving was a little bit not quite up to the mark, you know? And we had very good design tutors too. You probably haven't come across somebody called Margaret Maloney, a painter in Golden Bay. She was one of our special tutors. So I think what happened was that somehow the Craft Design students really kind of felt slightly superior...

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ We're just talking about the weaving course. I'm absolutely clueless as to regards dates. You see, Nola was one of our first tutors and she's very good on dyeing and spinning and things like that. She's written books about wool. You were also President of the Woolcraft Society for how long?

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ For three years.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Well, I started off as a spinner. We came to Nelson from Dunedin and before I left Dunedin I thought, "I don't know anybody in Nelson, I need to have something to do." My daughter actually was spinning at that stage, she was quite keen, so I went to three spinning classes and then... Well, you need to do something with your yarn! I do knit but that just... weaving follows on.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ That would've been seventy...? I did it over two years because we had the Festival in Nelson and I think that was in seventy-eight? Seventy-seven or seventy-eight.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ It was a painful experience... [Laughter] Well there were all these three hour exams at the end.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, she was. We were mostly mature women, there were no young people... In those days I would've been... Well, I'm eighty-one now. Much younger!

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ I would've been in my forties.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ The first course I went to... There were some in a house down in Brook Street somewhere.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ That's right.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ I didn't go to those.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ You could go there for a week and weave. I did that at one time... And she would give you an assistance if you asked for it but you weren't pressured in any way, you could do your own thing.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ The Cod and Lobster [on Trafalgar Street, formerly Smythes].

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ It was it had quite a few looms in it.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Not lots of interesting exhibitions in that gallery. Of all sorts, not just weaving. Various media.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Although Ruth Lorenz was weaving fabric and she did exquisite fabrics.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ In the late nineteen sixties, Nelson became a member in seventy-two, or perhaps you might say the beginning of seventy-three, but they made the decision in seventy-two. The Society put out a twenty-five year history.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Port Nicholson was very strong.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Port Nicholson. Kathleen Lowe, Dorothea Turner and one other.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ They were quite dominant characters.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Marjorie Blackman she's a weaver extraordinaire. She's also a curator of textiles.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ At the beginning it was technique.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ There wasn't a lot of fabric weaving before, as you say, until Anna came.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ We all learned to draft! And it was very useful too!

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Well techniques became... I can remember the phrase, "This is a dinosaur."

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ No, no but the way it was taught was the dinosaurs.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ It would be longer than that Philippa, because she started in the late seventies and it went until the end of the nineties just about, didn't it? I wasn't there at the end of it.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Techniques were incidental and there wasn't a great deal of attention really given to techniques.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Blenheim's always been strong, yes.

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ I think it was also a boom for spinning. That was the time when the Society was running festivals and those festivals were big. I think in Hastings they had 1500 at a festival, which is quite a lot when you consider it. The most the membership has ever been was over 8000, just over 8000.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ I think it went along with the rise in the women's movement actually. Because women in the country had never at home not getting their hands outside the farm and I think they saw it as a way they could make some money from spinning and knitting and things like that, and they got together with other women, in groups. And I think it was a very powerful stimulus to feeling that what you were doing was worthwhile. It was very, very, always considered that what is worthwhile is because you get paid for, and if you're a woman at home not getting paid, then if you can sell some skeins of hand-spun wool or make a blanket, which you can sell locally, you feel a lot better about yourself. And your husband probably feels quite good about it too!

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ It's interesting how the interest in weaving in Nelson has gone down, isn't it? Now it's coming back up a bit. But other places, like Blenheim...

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ [Anna] always laid a lot of stress on design... I shouldn't say this really but I think that her own sense of design was not that developed really. And she kept getting people in to teach design who were not really up to scratch.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, [I think that's fair comment] You'd get all these people coming to be interviewed for a place on the Weaving School. It was quite hard to get in. At one time we had to turn down quite a few people and I think really... that you had to let people know that they were going to have to work quite hard. And most of them got their heads down and did. And a lot of them in the first term of weaving, which had a lot of simple drafting and stuff in it, they loved it. Anna used to set up the table looms, or get them to set them up with many, many samples on. Most of those people... Have you got your samples still, Nola?

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ No, I think I've got rid of mine. Alison Wilkie's still got her full set... I know people who have been through the course who have a really beautiful set of samples, all their notes and everything.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ What we got on to was how the Craft Design people sort of quietly took over the Weaving School. At one time we were having two streams of fifteen people each year going through the Diploma course and then it seemed almost overnight, they drifted away and I just decided I didn't want to teach it any more, so I'd only teach part-time. And I was saying to Annie, it was like kindergarten, teaching the Craft Design students. And it wasn't just weaving because Gavin Hitchens who's a very good jeweller, he was teaching the silver-smithing course there and they all had this very highfalutin idea about design. When a gold-smith from Akaroa, Kobi Bossard, who was also a German-trained crafts person, came and took over from Gavin for a term, everyone in jewellery started to rebel and said, "Why were we never taught things like Kobi teaches us? How to make the things, not just design them!"

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ Weaving was a dinosaur.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ We did have that weaving course for quite a long time, it must've been about eight years.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ I went to America in 1993 to give that lecture tour and I finished at Polytech in 1993. After that, there wasn't any weaving much. I mean Ronette probably taught a bit to people who were interested but there wasn't a weaving course.

**P** \_\_\_\_\_ It's interesting how the interest in weaving in Nelson has gone down, isn't it? Now it's coming back up a bit. But other places, like Blenheim...

**N** \_\_\_\_\_ Blenheim's always been strong, yes.

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And that would've tied in too with the rise in the interest in wool. I mean people got to know a lot about wool; Nola knows tons about sheep and wool, she wrote a book about it.

I must say I've been more interested in the art side of it really; I've always liked the colours and things like that. And I've loved complicated drafts, if they made sense to me to achieve something I've wanted in the way of colour. But I've never been a great fabric weaver.

**P** I think what happened to me was that once I started to teach, I thought I've always got to be a step ahead of these people so I learnt a lot because I'm quite good at learning from books and I've got a lot of books. And I think that's what happened to a lot of the older weavers who were in different parts of the country and didn't have a lot of contact they couldn't be at Polytech. Some used to come to those Polytech classes.

**P** And we used to run a lot of different courses out in the country. I've done several courses in Murchison, for instance. And you'd get these people who really had very little in their lives apart from their dairy farms and they all loved to come to workshops because they'd meet other people. It was great. And it still goes on but not to the extent that it did. I feel sorry for them today!

**P** I was just saying to Annie about the weaver that used to live in this house. This house is historic as far as weaving goes. When I bought it, thirty-five years ago, it was ready to be pulled down. I've got some photos of how it was... It definitely ties in with how a weaver built it and I've only really come to terms with that lately.

**P** When Anna Correa-Hunt and her family came to live in Nelson, they lived in Blick House to start with. That was where she ran her first day courses, that's where she had that terrible row. She was very interested in the connection, the historic connection.

It's so sad that this man and Thomas Blick moved their factory down to a place opposite the Queen's Gardens. I can't see where that would've been, can't see any trace of it. I'm sure one could probably find out.

**P** The panelling in this room, that came from the basement of that house.

**A** Do you remember when you were a child, was there much hand-weaving or spinning?

**A** I was house-sitting for a woman – Teddy Holland.

**A** They live up around the back of the Boys' College I was house-sitting for them and I had to put the pool chemicals in, so had to go out to the shed to get them and I saw what I thought must be a loom, a little table loom. And when they came back, I said, "Is that a loom?" "Oh yes," she said. "Would you like to have it?" I was just moving to Wellington at that stage and I said, "I don't know how to use it and don't want to take it unless I can find somebody that will show me."

As soon as I got there, I contacted the Guild and met Robyn Parker and she said, "Well, I don't do it that often but if I can get about six people together, I'll do a beginners weaving class at my home. And you will come every Saturday afternoon for five weeks. You'll learn how to wind a warp, thread up the loom and after that, you're on your own." And I said, "Yes, yes, yes! I'd love to go." And another couple of people were interested and so after that, I got my loom sent up and just kept going and have learnt really all from those women at Port Nicholson and at the Wellington Guild.

**A** Before I had even seen the loom at Teddy's house, I had found a rigid heddle in an op shop...

**A** That's what Robyn said too! "Get rid of that thing!" But Meg [Nakagawa] showed me how to do up and down on that to get going right at the beginning. But once I got the table loom...

**P** A lot of people do get really primitive weaving equipment to start with and it really puts them off. You can have quite primitive weaving that works very well, but a lot of things like rigid heddles are a perfect blight. We used to start people, our first project in Weaving School, was a backstrap loom. And that was quite good because you could set a backstrap loom up anywhere.

**P** The sad thing is, that a lot of really sophisticated equipment was bought actually under my watch because I had a very good relationship with the Head of our Department, who was actually from the automotive area in the Polytech. Les and I used to do very creative accounting so that we could have some really nice weaving equipment. I always feel grateful for that because we did have lovely looms. Anna had this enormous great big flying shuttle loom that you could weave really wide lengths of cloth on and that was really good for people to see how it could be done. And it could be done by them, really, it's just a question of having the materials and the practice.

**A** What was it like getting hold of materials at that stage?

**P** Nancy and I used to go down to Christchurch and go to the carpet factories and it was like Aladdin's Cave. You don't have that anymore because I think they've most of them closed down. We used to go to Mosgiel where there was a big mill and used to get lots of wool on cops. There were a lot of places you could get wool. We had a whole room full of wool; it was called 'The Wool Room'. People went and got their wool and we had accounts, they paid accounts, and we had lots of fine yarns because Anna liked singles wool for tweeds and things like that. I've still got quite a lot of wool out at Cable Bay – isn't it dreadful! I've probably got the finer wool because I ended up making those fantasy scarves and I only needed fine threads for those.

**P** Yes [no cotton or linen] silk you could buy from various places but I think people now rely a lot more on kid mohair and stuff like that.

**P** Silk was so precious I've still got silk at home.

**A** And what became of the looms?

**P** Well...

**P** The looms were put underneath the pottery where there was a big storage cellar and you could only get at it by lifting up the floor and crawling down and from various times they have had auctions at Polytech and the looms were all put out and people bought them, I suppose. But the thing was they weren't... I feel very bad about this because it probably was up to me to sort everything out and put everything so you had a set of sticks and various things for a loom and we didn't really take much pride in that.

**P** I think people would have bought them and found they had half of something missing. So I don't know. Some of those looms were worth about \$10,000 in those days. The Mecchia flying shuttle... I had a Mecchia dobby loom and I sold it – did I sell it? I don't think I did, I think I gave it to that weaver from Karamea Joss Boss, Dutch woman. She knew what to do with it and I didn't want it to go to anybody who didn't understand what they were doing.

If you want to buy a loom, Annie, you're sure to find one around.

**P** David Thorp – yes, we used to get our best ones from Mecchia in Hamilton and then the Bartlets in Christchurch. Bartlett looms were the best, they were lovely, very sturdy.

**A** So all the looms were made in New Zealand?

**P** We occasionally imported them from Australia – those eight-shaft table looms came from Australia. I think.

**P** I remember going to collect those in Auckland, having to drive out to the airport and go to one of those loading bay places and pick them up. Gosh, the things we did! We didn't mind. It was a great life really.

**A** And what became of Anna Correa-Hunt?

**P** Well, eventually she went to visit her son in Easter Island and she got ill and she died.

**P** And that was quite a sudden thing.

**P** She had always been very tense, very much under stress, I think. And she had a very difficult husband, too, which can't have helped. She thought he was wonderful!

**P** But really it's to do with Anna and Nancy. She was there such an upsurge of interest... Lots and lots of people learned to weave at Nancy's Foc'sle Weavers. That was a little company that she set up down in town. Lots of people who live here now have been taught by Nancy or have woven with her.

**P** There were two distinct kinds of people: the young people who thought they could make a living from it, and they were the ones that in a way I was most interested in and then there were people who were married and didn't need extra money. There were a lot of wives of quite wealthy businessmen who came to the Polytech...

**P** I think so?

**P** People like that. I'm always coming across people who say, "Don't you remember who I was? I did do a year at the Polytech." And I think, "I can't remember, really." I remember the younger ones who were really keen.

**P** And I always used to include a little bit of business, like: if you make two cushion covers, they cost you this much and you'll never make a profit. If you make twelve, and sell them, then you are in business. Because I'd been through that myself.

**P** I think out of each year's intake of fifteen people, there would probably be three people who would go away being very serious about carrying on and some of them would carry on; there'd be another half dozen who have enjoyed it but say, "When I have time, when I'm not going out to golf or bridge."

**P** It was lovely really, because these women were mostly very nice people, there was a lovely atmosphere at the Weaving School. They were always having pot-luck dinners...

**P** Yes. They did, they loved Nelson, of course... But there weren't so many other Polytech students staying so it would've been easier for them. They mostly had flats, actually. They shared. And they worked at night at Chez Eelco or Cobb & Co. Robyn used to work there and used to bring back all the bits to feed our cats. It was a lovely time and I'm really pleased to talk about it...

**P** Different skills entirely.

**A** That's true

**P** And nowadays people would get them professionally made up I think... We thought we could do everything.

**A** About the import restrictions... Do you think that was why hand-weaving was happening? Did they have an impact on crafts at all?

**P** No, I don't think so. It's just that, generally speaking, there wasn't much imported for design sort of stuff. So if you wanted to have something special, you actually had to make it yourself. Or get somebody else to make it. And that's not true anymore. There are so many textiles now that are cheap and pleasant to look at and... You don't have to do that anymore. We always had to do it for ourselves I suppose.

**P** In a way, that's what some people like about weaving I used to like that about making knotted rugs. I felt it was like painting with wool. You're always involved in a little bit of activity and then you could go to your loom with all this nice cut wool and... take off.

And she was great on finishing. That was another thing that we sort of dinned into people was how important it was to finish cloth properly... We had big cloth rollers... We had amazing equipment at the Polytech and by the time that weaving course was over... It is rather awful that it's gone. I don't really remember what happened at the end... I went away for six months... so by the time I got back, it was a new heaven and a new earth and it was mostly the craft design people who were in charge. But a great scene really and a great era. And two independent workshops came out of that, Seven Weavers which no longer exists and Fibre Spectrum which does.

There's lots and lots of weavers around, but a lot of them aren't weaving anymore. You could come to our weavers lunch! Meet six weavers who no longer weave.

**P** Twenty years, twenty five years perhaps. We've met, haven't we?

**P** Ten years probably.

**P** And we often don't mention weaving, do we... you move on you know, there is life after weaving Annie!

**N** You have, you've done beautiful stools.

**N** That was something the Society did, bring [tutors] to the Festival and to do a bit of a tour afterwards. We had some very good people in those days – internationally respected weavers would come and that also created a lot of interest amongst the communities, the weaving communities, because they would see beautiful things and, as you say, get excited.

**N** We didn't have much internet in those days.

**N** The first of Anna's courses that I went to was held in what used to be the doctor's house on the corner of Hardy Street and Alton...

**N** One of my grandmothers had a spinning wheel that I didn't ever see her use but I remember seeing it in her house and this would be when I was very young. I didn't know anybody who did that... but during the War, women used to spin and make greasy warm things for sub-mariners. That's when Ashfords first started making spinning wheels, I think.

**N** And there was another woman who did natural dyeing... She must've been [involved with Perrine], I'm sure they knew each other.

**N** Yes, there was Iris and that's where I learned about the other woman, Kathleen somebody I think... you know who I mean?... can you draw her name out of?

My daughter Jane, who is now sixty, one school holidays we had a house in Dunedin with three little steps and with a skewer and a potato on the end, did some spindle spinning on the steps. Which I think we got from the Arthur Mees Encyclopaedia or something like that. That's the first spinning that went on in our house.

Jane was spinning before I was because Bill bought... On his way to work one day he saw in Jimmy Brown's second-hand shop a little spinning wheel and bought it. And we took it to a Dutch man, the Little Peggy man, who was in Dunedin, to fix it up. She must've been a bit older then. And then Elaine taught her to spin, I think.

What are your interests, Annie?

**N** Pat's my brother! [Teddy's husband].

**N** You've got some wonderful weavers up there to learn from...

**N** A lot of those girls – they were mostly girls, there were a few men, but not many – they didn't have much money for buying equipment of their own so it was great for them.

**N** It would be fair to say that wool was all that was available virtually.

**N** Alpaca is grown here, and mohair as you say. We still don't have a silk industry.

**N** And linen was quite hard to come by. You had to import it from Sweden or somewhere like that.

**N** That is a tragedy.

**N** It was sad to see them all being sold, anyway.

**N** It wouldn't be difficult, when you're ready.

**N** Beautiful to touch... Ken Bartlett, Bill owned one of those, Alison's got it because she thought she might make rugs but I don't think she will.

**N** There were import restrictions, you couldn't import them.

**N** There wasn't anybody making little looms much. Ashfords then started...

**N** They took her to Tahiti, to a hospital in Tahiti, and was brought back here after she'd died.

**N** Yes, she'd just gone for this holiday...

**N** Not an easy person for most people.

**N** Do you know how many did go on to make a successful business? I think of Anna Williams...

**N** Some people used it as a 'gap' year, I think. Which is a jolly good way to do it!

**N** And it took many weavers a long time to realise this. And it was one reason that...

Weaving fabric is one skill, making up that fabric is quite a different skill and it took quite a lot of us a long time to realise this. They didn't go hand in hand.

**N** We did, but then we'd grown up doing everything because we didn't have anything.

**N** I don't think that I could answer that.

**N** I still believe that, as you mentioned earlier, one of the big contributors to the lack of activity is the fact that it takes so long... Feeling now is popular because you do something one day and you've got something. Weaving is not like that. And you have to have a few extra skills for weaving.

**N** But for years and years, how long has this been going?

**N** At least. We used to meet at Nancy's and how long has Nancy... hasn't been with us for a long time.

**N** Is that all? How does it feel more than that. It started up so that when you had problems, we met at lunchtime so it didn't cut in... We'd bring our weaving, people would offer help and that's how it started the weavers lunch. Now we go and have a good time. Enjoy each others company.