



**MORECAMBE BAY PARTNERSHIP
HEADLANDS TO HEADSPACE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
2015-2018**

Cumbria County Council, The Factory,
Castle Mills, Aynam Road, Kendal, LA9 7DE
Tel: 015397 34888

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

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FRONTSHEET

INTERVIEW NO: H2H2015.3
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Keith Willacy
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1936
INTERVIEWER/S: Jenn Mattinson
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LOCATION: Morecambe
TRANSCRIBER: Malcolm Sole

Summary of Interview:

No of Tracks: 2

Main Contents of Transcript (Brief Description):

Track 1: Former fisheries officer across the North West, was a fisherman for a time
Track 2: Talks about dialect

So Keith if you start by telling me about your early life, where you were born and when you were born.

Well, I was born in the middle of town, on a place called Sun Street, that area now is all pulled down and is now part of the Arndale Shopping Centre, and er I went to a local school which in those days was called Euston Road School but is now called Morecambe Bay Community Primary School, that was where I when I went to school and I went straight away there through the infants, through the juniors, through the seniors, then, then I er left school when I was fifteen and that is when I took up fishing with my father and that's what I did.

What year were you born Keith if you don't mind me asking?

I don't mind you asking at all, 36, 1936.

And can you tell me about your family network, um your mother and whether you had any siblings and your father?

Well yeh, going back with the family, the family weren't originally from here, they were from a little village um just outside um Wigan and the er Willacy family, they moved here, in the eighteen seventies to become landlord and landlady at a local pub in Morecambe called the, the Morecambe Hotel and that was in the centre of what was in the original village of Poulton and nearly all the pub customers were local Morecambe fishermen as they were know and the son of the first Earl of Willacy's became friends with the local fishermen and they used to take him out fishing with them and he got hooked on it and that's when he started the Willacy family, started in the fishing industry.

And what, what was his name and what sort of year are we talking about?

It was er in the, in the 1880's, early 1890's and originally the name Willacy is Norman because they came over er in 1066 and the Battle of Hastings and their original name was William de Lacey (ph)

All right

And as the, as they go and they were actually lords of an area just outside of Wigan and as the years went by the name was changed because William de Lacey is er his descendants were also called Willacy er were called William de Lacey, but de Lacey is Norman French for son of and as the years went by it became Will Lacey having dropped the de and that is how the name Willacy came into being and er there were Willacy's back into the 1870s and that is when they moved as I say to Morecambe as landlord and land lady of the Morecambe Hotel, that is also on Lord Street because that area round there was Old Poulton, the original village.

And did you have any brother or sisters?

I had a brother who unfortunately, he died of TB when he was only sixteen, he started fishing with me dad after he'd left school, back in those days TB was quite a fatal illness, but I had loads of cousins through the Willacy family, lots and lots of cousins, in fact, Mark, you've already met Mark, he's the son of my cousin Jack Willacy, OK!

So there was you left then when your unfortunate brother died?

Yes, yeh

So what memories do you have of growing up in your household?

Oh, oh quite good actually, er because during the summer holidays in Morecambe as it was then er there used to be along the shore on the sea front there used to be pony rides companies and quite a lot of us kids used to go and help with the pony rides on the shore so I was brought up involved in ponies and pony riding and things like that, and another thing we always used to do, because as I said before, quite a lot of the holiday makers, you know, used to come into town by train, and a lot of us kids used to go with bogies and little hand carts, meet these people of the train and take put their luggage and take them to the hotel-we used to get about sixpence a go. That is what we used to do when we was kids and I was quite keen on football when I was young.....and that was about it.

And did you have, do you have memories of going out then fishing with your family members when you were very small?

Oh yes, yeh, yeh.

What do you remember about that?

Er well just going into the bay.....we were all very close together, really close families but er... I meant to say... mainly as I've already said you know, we used to mess about making pocket money in the summer holidays with the visitors, the holiday makers.....and er it was just a kid's life, that's how it was yeh, as I say when I left school I went fishing full time with me dad.....and erthe main area of the local fishermen they had their own meeting group in association with all the local fishermen.....and about 99 per cent of the local fishermen were Methodists and er....some were....you know deep into Methodism, my...grandfather Willacy he was ... very very deep in Methodism and they had their own churches round the town and they also formed choirs, fishermen's choirs and they used to perform all that sort of stuff and they had their own methods of doing all sorts of things....in fact-right up until the

Methodists you know the Methodists died out ...and...and the churches were sold for other reasonsthe fishermen used to organise their own funeral service and what they used to do wasthey'd organise the funeral service in the Methodist church which all the fishermen and families would be present....and four fishermen would be selected to carry the coffin and they would carry the coffin out of the hearse and into the church, then after the service they would go and.....pick up the coffin and take it out of the church and put in the hearse and then all the...all the fishermen present would form a line up in front of the hearse and then walk in front of the hearse onto the promenade until we got to Green Street which was one of the fishing centres, and then at Green Street they would come off the road and form a line along the promenade and the hearse would drive slowly past it on the way to the cemetery or the crem. And that was...that was known as the fisherman's last look at the sea, they drive, along the promenade and then when the hearse had disappeared they would break up and go home mainly but some of them...very devout and strict Methodists, in fact my grandfather, him and some of his mates...er.... they broke away from their Methodist church to form their own because they were such strict Methodists, they didn't believe that people should be paid for working on a Sunday it was a religious day and one reason they broke away from their own church was because the vicar.....held..... actually worked on a Sunday giving services and things like that, so what they did, they broke away from him and formed their own devout Methodist centre and they even-had their own Methodist church built which is still there but it isn't a Methodist church any more, it's next to the Chieftan Hotel which is a pub in the centre of Morecambe on Pedder Street and is now the headquarters of the Sea Cadets and that was what they did...urm... mind you my Mum and dad, although they were Methodists they weren't strict Methodists and I originally started off as a Methodist going to the local Methodist church which is no longer a church it's the Rainbow Centre again that's in the centre of Morecambe when I started school the kids I started to get matey with were mainly all protestant and er I...I..I got in with them and I started to go to Protestant Sunday school with them 'nd me Mum and Dad, no they didn't

care as long as I went to some sort of religious function and the church that I went to was St. Lawrence's, which is now deserted, it's been abandoned and that's in the centre of Morecambe as well.

So um just to clarify can you tell me the names of your Mum and your dad and your grandparents.

Um yeh, me father was Amos Willacy, his. father was David and his mother was Angelina...that was the original mother they had and er after she died, which was the tradition in those days my grandfather David married her sister Linda that was so they could bring up the family and er on me mother's side, me mother was called Margaret or Maggie as they liked to call her in those days, she was a Muir (ph) and er and they were originally from up in Northumberland and er they ran a boarding house for holidaymakers and they moved here into Morecambe and I don't really know an awful lot about me mother's side of the family but they were bright enough kids, absolutely brilliant

And er I want you to imagine that I don't know anything about fishing what so ever and if you go back to being a small boy, can you describe some those outings you went on with your dad and your grandfather when they went out fishing?

Oh yes, yes! Morecambe Bay as it was then had local..... channels in it and they all had local nameser.....the channel running off alongside Morecambe itself that was formed by the River Keer which the Keer itself is near Carnforth, they called that the Ring O, that was the local name of it, and then as you went along past the Stone Jetty there was another fishing area there which was called The Hollow, and they used to fish in there, the turning back up towards the North East there was a channel which ran from Arnside and that was what we called it, just 'the channel', that was the main fishing area

What kind of fishing were they doing?

Er during the summer months it was shrimp fishing and during the winter they were fluke fishing, catching flukes and plaice, no shrimps at all ..er... but also one of the places they used to go to, they used to fish off Blackpool and that was like a winter fishery, fishing off Blackpool. Er... the other types of fish they used to catch were prawns and they would be caught off Fleetwood, on the way out, yer know, towards the end of the bay, but then in the late 1960's a new boat fishing operation started and that was fishing for whitebait and that was a stationary fishing activity, you had this large square net and you anchored your fishing boat in a channel and the large net was hung underneath the boat and.....and you waited for [inaud] for catching whitebait.

And was that just for you and your father that re-introduced those nets?

Yes, yes the whitebait net yeh because me dad had a friend who worked down south for Young's, I don't know if you've ever heard of Young's but they used to do that sort of fishing but anyway they had a bit of a drawback and me dad's friend was talking to them about it and er asked him if he would like to give it a try in Morecambe so he said yes, so they gave us the net.

And how old were you at this time?

Er.....I would be er nearly twenty because I had from eighteen to twenty I had in those days, you had to do National Service and I was in the royal Navy for two years, this is when we started whitebait fishingI hadn't been out of the Navy very long when that started, that was a winter fishery.

Just going back to when you were talking about your father and your grandfather taking you out fishing, did they, sort of, you know, make a

point of teaching you how to do it or did you just go along and you were just expected to get on with it?

Oh yeh, you-watched what they did, that's what they did-with the shrimp fishing ...you had to riddle them to get rid of the small shrimps and then when you'd got them all sorted and all the seaweed and rubbish picked out then you boiled the shrimps on a coal fired boiler. And that was that

So did you enjoy going out then with them?

Oh yeh! Yeh yeh I really liked it. Well you were brought up into it, it was....yer know part of the family going back.

And what made you, did you make a conscious decision to be a fisherman or did you just think that was the only path for you that you wanted to be a fisherman?

Erm...really I suppose because yer know, it was quite an important business in the town in those days...yeh...yeh.

I'll let you light your cigarette.

But I really loved it actually, yes...one other thing we used to do as a local fisherman, we used to be pilots for the cross bay swim because the cross bay swim started off on the other side of the bay at Grange and all the swimmers had to have a pilot to guide them across the bay to help them catch the proper runs of the tide and what we have our punts or dinghies as you would call them, which were row boats, we were towed across the Bay to Grange by fishing boats then you would be introduced to the swimmers, and they had their own guide did the timing and what have you, and then when the swim started we rowed across with them directly behind the dinghy so that if anything went wrong we could

grab'em and haul them in. They swam right across the bay to Morecambe and finished by the Stone Jetty.

And when did you start doing that then, being a pilot?

Aw... I would say it was just after I'd come out of the navy, I'd be nearly twenty.

Did you do it for a lot of years?

Oh yeh, yeh, yeh, it was abandoned, they stopped doing it, in fact, one of the swimmers that I piloted was Dorothy Perkins, yes.

Fancy that!

Yeh, yeh she was a cross bay swimmer was Dorothy Perkins.

Did you have a nice chat to her?

Oh yeh, yeh, yeh before we started and after we'd finished and got them out of the water yeh that was ages ago.

Nice Lady?

Yeh, she was, yeh she was.

OK so if you could take me back to when you first started then, um sort of going out with your father like when you turned fifteen when you started, when you'd left school and if you could talk me through what you were doing and the processes that you were using when you were going out to catch the different fish?

Er....well...obviously you worked on tide times and er....you get generallyer.....[inaud] days...days and nights depending when...when it's high water or low water and er....you would row out to your fishing boat at its moorings and get aboard, start up the engine and then leave the dinghy fastened to the mooring rope, let go, and then head off to which ever fishing area you were going to and if you were on your way there you'd sort the boiler out, put fresh sea water in it and get the fire started and that was it until you got to where you were going and in those early days you didn't have water depth machines you used to use a lead line for the depth which you threw alongside the boat and every fathom was a knot so you knew how deep the water was and you knew as you started to get shallower, say down to about fifteen foot you coiled the lead line up and left it on the deck by the tiller and then you used a sounding oar so that you sound for the bottom and then when you came into the depth you wanted to put the net out, that was when you slowed down and spun the boat round head back the way you'd come, back down the channel and then you put the net out and that was that and you did that, again sounding, down the way you'd come, once you got towards the end of that particular ground and then you would haul the net and that was that.

And so you did the different types of fishing that your father and your grandfather did?

Oh yeh, yeh the shrimp net was a beam net the fluke trawl as we called it for catching fish, that wasn't on the beam, it was on doors which were on each side of the net and they were angled so that if you towed the net through the water, these doors kept the mouth of the net open and that was that part of it.

Did you find any particular types of fishing more lucrative than others or did you go through different phases?

A lot of it depended on the season of the year and on the market value, shrimps were quite good on the market value because we not only caught them and landed them into the Association that was owned and run by all of us er... then, the shrimps were picked and then after they were picked, they were again on the same premises, that's when they were potted.

And can you talk a bit about the association the groups of fishermen owned?

.....It was their own business, they'd got together and they were all shareholders.

Were you a shareholder?

Oh yes...yes...those that ran it were our own committee.

And what was its name?

.....Originally-it was ...Morecambe Bay Fisherman's Cooperative Society but then after a complaint from the original Cooperative ...they dropped the name Cooperative and it became Morecambe Fisherman's Association, that was that.

And which of the fishermen were in the cooperative alongside you, what were the called?

Ohh.....nearly all of the families, there was our lot, the Willacys, there was Woodhouse's, there was Baxter's, there was Mount's, there was Gardner's and Gerrard's.

And did you ever go out fishing together?

No you didn't, you fished with your family, quite a lot of them were sons fishing with fathers, others there was brothers fishing together you were close knit families, really in those days.but er they were a tight group, as I said there was also the Morecambe's Fishermen's Association that looked after their other business apart from the fishing side of it and they also ran their own lifeboat, fisherman's lifeboatand they used to have meetings two or three times a year sorting things out and also sorting out funeral business, so yeh we were a very very very close knit community, always.

And can you any particular memories or stories connected to your time fishing that you'd like to talk about?

well not straight out of me head, one thing that we...well remember is er going out with the [inaud], going out as a crew member of the Sir William Priestly, the fishermen's lifeboat, and rescuing some of the fishing boats in storms that had parted from their moorings, that had broken away from their moorings, but you know that was about it really.

Do you want to tell me about one of those storms, incidents?

Er.....er there was one er.....that I remember fairly well, but it was a big storm and a boat called the Nancy, she parted from her moorings, because in those days in daylight when the weather was bad, all the fishermen used to meet together on the promenade...shelter and er..... we saw the Nancy break away from her moorings, so we all ran along the promenade.....the Central Pier was where the Fisherman's lifeboat was based andboarded the lifeboat and took off after her and we managed to get alongside of her, oh about two hundred yards off the sea wall and we managed to get on board and er tow her off back to find safe moorings, but at the same time that we were doing that another of the fishermen's lifeboat, the Peggy she parted her moorings and er while we were still towing the Nance off, because we couldn't do anything about

the Peggy and that was when she smashed the sea wall and was wrecked and that was that.

It must have been a wild night!

Oh, it wasn't a night actually, it was daytime, about midday something like that, what we called the spring tide....the highest time of the tide at that period, cos' the spring tide was when the tides were very high. And when the tides were a bit lower, they were neap tides, that was.....yer know.....yer learned all that sort of stuff over the years from other people.

And how long were you involved with the Morecambe lifeboat?

Ooh right until just before it was packed in, because in the 1960's was when the RNLI opened a lifeboat station of their own at Morecambe and er...I was part of that organisation and er then the Priestly was retired and er I took over as senior helmsman for Morecambe Inshore Lifeboat and I did that for oh for about ten years, something like that.

What does a senior helmsman do?

Well...(laughs) just steered the boats, you were in charge of the boat on the service call or on exercise, you used to have exercises at least once a month and that was what you did

Was it a paid job or not?

Oh no no no.

No, it was voluntary.

Yes for the RNLI yes....and the first what they called the ILB's which was inshore lifeboat and they were rubber dinghies with a crew of three and an outboard motor and that was it.

And how did you first get involved with it?

Well! Because at the time I was I was also secretary of the fishermen's lifeboat ...and it was me that the RNLI contacted and put the suggestions to us... you know ...would we accept you know, helping crew their lifeboat, that's how I got involved.

So you started fishing aged about sort of fifteen professionally?

Yeh

Then you went into the navy for a couple of years and the how long did you fish for after that?

Oh....oh maybe for about ten years, something like that. Well....after my father died I carried on fishing singly and then well the catches started to reduce because you know because of the weather and the changes of the sea channels and the offer of a job came up from the Fishing Committee which was an organisation to enforce fishing regulations, yer know, fish size, sizes of mesh on nets and all that sort of thing so.. I went for it and I...I got it.

(The dog has stopped barking!)

You must have been a great man for the job considering all the experience you'd had.

Well...well oh yeh yeh yeh I applied for it and I got it straight away and what we did it was then known as the Lancashire & Western Sea Fisheries Joint Committee.....and the offices were based in Preston....and as well as office

staff and things like that, each area had a Fishery Officer allocated to it and that job was to tour round an allocated area and check the fishing activities 'nd...and things like that, and when I started I was allocated the central area which covered, which ran from Fleetwood down to Southport and yer had your own patrol vehicle and.....yer drove round in that you know, checking on the fishing activities and things like that...the...I'd done that for about three years and the local Fishery Officer who lived in Grange, he retired and I applied for that shift and I got it so I was then Sea...Sea Fishery Officer ...er.....covering from the River Wyre up to the River Duddon in south Cumbria so I did that.

Large areas?

Oh yeh...I did that for um several years then we had a new Clerk & Chief Fisheries officer started with running the business from the offices in Preston, well things started to change in the Fishery Board and things like that, well the Clerk & Chief Fishery Officer, his original job was not only office work and that sort of stuff but also at least once a month to tour round the entire fishery area checking up that the Fishery Officers were doing their job because of this increase in legislation...er the Fishery Officers at that time just couldn't do it so I was appointed as deputy to the Fishery Officer so at least once a month I toured round all the other guys to check that everything was doing all right, I did that for several years and the Chief fishery Officer that I was working under, he retired and we got a new Chief Fishery Officer based on Preston he was in the job for just two years, and he was.....was quite...in his fifties and er he had a heart attack and he had to, you know, he was off work for a while so I was upgraded a little more and after two years the Fishery Officer couldn't come back because of his health, so I was upgraded again to be his replacement which is what I did until I retired when I was sixty five.

So what sort of year did you start working as a Fishery Officer?

Oh god it's hard to say it would be back in the mid to late eighties, something like that.

And the Fleetwood and Southport area must have been incredibly busy?

Oh yeh yeh they were, yes they were because the Southport area was all shore fishing it wasn't boat fishing it was all shrimping with, well when they first startedthey were nets towed through the water from horse and cart but as it went on they became tractors, towing them with tractors and that was how it progressed.

So then how did your role as the Fishery Officer in Southport and Fleetwood, how did that compare to when you then came back and covered sort of Morecambe and South Cumbria?

Well pretty easy actually because the fishery activity Southport and Blackpool was er very similar to what it was from north of Morecambe Bay you know and Flookburgh er so...so I knew that that type of fishing, it was pretty easy yeh.

And can you just provide a bit more detail into the actual role itself, what exactly did you have to do say I don't know, a typical kind of day of activities that you might be doing?

Well no not really, it was...it was the season of the year that sort of controlled what you did and when you did it.....it was pretty mobile sort of activity, yeh.

You were very practical, were you in the office quite a bit or were you out and about a lot?

Oh aye, out and about a lot out and about an awful lot ...er say the office was based... in Preston...and there is no fishing activity from Preston

And so based on your experience did you have any say or influence in how the regulations were sort of being carried out?

Well...er...no not really...er...the the local area fishery was controlled by bye-laws but that was mainly the shrimp fishery, the mussel fishery and the cockle fisherythe away from the shrimping, cockling and musseling, the mesh size of net and the er landing size of fish that was controlled by er national legislation yeh.

And how did it work then because you probably knew the especially in the Morecambe area, you'd know a lot of the fishermen that essentially you were going out...out and meeting?

Oh yeh...oh yeh

And how was that relationship?

It was quite good, quite good actually, um I mean the one thing I had to be fair was treat them all the same and you know er no er ducking and diving, everybody had to meet with the legislation, that was important and they knew that I was I was going to deal with everybody as the law demanded, and that's what I did.

And what happened if they didn't meet the regulations?

They were summoned, went to court, simple as that and I would have to go alongas the chief witness and actually there was not a lot of that going on when I was working there. There was occasional breaking of the legislation but in the main that was committed by people who were part time fishing 'n the er main regulations, parts of the regulations er that were broken would be the er landing size of fish, shrimping were pretty easy to combine.

So what differences did you see in those who were full time fishermen, like you said had been brought up on it to the part-time fishermen?

Well.....the part-time fishermen were working on a regular basis, so they tried to make as heavy a landing of whatever fish that they were dealing with, like cockles and mussels and the more they could land and sell obviously the more money they could make, so it was it was basically yer know a win win win attempt.

And it would be good to find out a little bit more about the um...er how you found lots of the different areas, 'cos it sounds like you know you went to such a wide variety of places. How did they all compare what was going on?

Pretty much equally.....which ever type of fishing was carried out, well when I first started through the fishing areas you had a patrol car to drive. alongside the beach and then you had to walk it, walk out 'n up 'n down and one thing and another and then.....the quad bikes were introduced, yer know the four wheeled and hoohoo that was easy, you towed that, behind the car with you and away you went, yep.

And was there anything major then that you had to do during your time as a fishery officer, or as you got promoted?

No, no not really it just yer know, it just went on and on and on and on.....simple as that but as the time went on the fishing actually started to decrease.

I was going to ask you what, what changes did you see in the actual industry?

Well a decrease of full time fishermen yer know for a start, because instead of like the old days when the family joined together and grew together and went on together er because jobs were easier to get. And probably a paid wage rather than having to fish for a wage and it started to decrease as the ...fishermen, once they had retired that was it, gone, gone from the family, yep.

Did you see a change in morale um in the fishermen themselves?

Ummm...no not really it was a yer know just a straight carry on as yer go that sort of thing, yep.

And so when did you retire then Keith?

I retired at the retirement age of sixty five.

So what year (I'm not very good at maths).

Well considering that I was born in 1936 and I retired sixty five years late.

19...no 2000.

(laughs) Yeh

Early 2000

Yeh

Ish

Yeh. And that was itI walked away from it, easy as that.

You said that regulations started to change quite a bit. When was that sort of happening?

That was in the nineties, early nineties when new government started to change, when they were increasing the mesh size for the nets, increasing the landing size for some of the fish, yeh that was national legislation, a lot of it, yeh.

And did any of them affect fishermen financially?

Er well yeh...with increasing the mesh size that they had to have new nets made and that sort of thing and also the amount. The weight landings of the fish obviously decreased because there was less fish allowed to be landed yeh, that sort of thing.

And did you think any of the regulations then had an impact on the decline of

Oh yes, some of them, yeh they did because as I say the fishermen themselves were getting old 'ndin the main there....the sons were getting jobs ashore on you know a fixed wage and that sort of thing, yeh.

So, I guess bringing us up to the present day um so now currently there's a couple of fishermen left sort of fishing in Morecambe?

Er.....well full time really there's only two of them now, there's me cousins son, Mark and there's a bloke called Ray Edmondson.

Could you, Mark is what, a member of your family, could you talk about Mark a little bit.

Actually I don't know a lot about him, we-were never very close on that...that side of the family. Mark is still fishing but one of the major disasters of Morecambe Bayas I said earlier there's all these different channels that were fishing grounds,well back in the I think, mid-nineties Morecambe had been hit several times ...by some very very bad storms which broke over the sea wall and flooded areas along the promenade and this started then to build sea protection things and now instead of it being sort of like a straight sea wall they've built out these huge stone barriers which you can see as you go along the promenade. Well these stone barriers affected the run off the river channels into the Bay and quite a lot of the Bay now is sand, a lot of the channels have been silted over so it's cut down the fishing areas and things like that and that is what suddenly the fishing activities just went clang and hit the deck, yeh that's that. And not only the changes of the channels interfered with the activities of the shrimps and the fish it also sanded over the mussel beds. There was quite big mussel beds off Morecambe in the early days but now...ninety per cent of them , if not more have been....sanded over with the shifting of the channels again the shifting of the tidal run so that's that.

And what do you think ...is there for the future of Morecambe and fishing?

Not a lot, in fact it's on its last legs now. There's only two full time fishermen and that's Ray Edmondson and Mark Willacy, it's gone , no more musseling also the same for the cockle beds, thicker sand has grown on there quite a lot of it because of the sea defences, the Bay isn't as it was.....changed a lot.

And how do you feel about that 'cos you've told me all about this Willacy family and tradition?

Well..... not a lot really because I've no fishing activity now actually you know in front of me or living off it, it's gone, it's a dump.

So what do you like to do with your time now then?

Ohhh...just rattle on like a pensioner, that's about it yep...and I'm interested in art, one of the things that come every Tuesday is that I go to art class and er ...that's about the main activity, yeh.

So I think we've almost come to the end of this bit really um I just wondered whether there was any other memories, anything you'd like to share really?

No... I think pretty well, pretty much through all of it to be honest yeh.

And you've always lived in Morecambe?

Yes, yes.

And did you have a family or did you get married?

Yeh... I married...my wife, when we first met was a telephone operator and through the years she moved up in promotion er in...in fact she became chief telephonist at Lancaster telephone exchange.

And was she from Morecambe?

No originally she was from a place called Throckley in Northumberland, they were Geordies and her family were miners but she was also extremely busy and interested in St. John's Ambulance and again she went through that over the years and she became officer in charge of the local St. John's Ambulance division and ..er...two sons my two grandsons, they got very interested in it and they both of them joined very early in their lives as cadets, one of them actually

now lives in London and works for St. John's as a child and adult co-ordinator so he's well up to his neck in St. John's.

When did you meet your wife?

Ah, I met her, oh god er about... we were in our mid-teens and she actually went to the same school as me and we met er on the Friday evening in those days there was a youth dance er programme on what was the old Morecambe Tower dance hall and that's where we met.

And so did um did you marry and um while you were fishing then?

Oh yeh. ..yeh

And what did she think of it?

She was with it, thought it was ok, yeh, well you see she came from a manual er family that were coal miners up in Northumberland...pretty similar.

And what was her name. Sorry Keith.

Jean.

Jean

Yeh she was called Jean Dodds before we were married and there was two other women that she absolutely hated, one was the woman who married her brother Robert Dodds and her name was Jean...so she hated her because she' stole her name and the wife of my cousin Arthur who was called Jean so there was a Jean in Northumberland and another Jean Willacy down here oh yeh... that's a photograph of her there in the St. John's uniform.

So what is then that makes Morecambe special to you, would you say?

Growing up in it and absolutely loving my wife's in it, absolutely, I mean now there's no.....hardly any holidaymakers come at all, there isn't the entertainment factor that yer now that attracted people they've all gone there was loads of cinemas er there was the Odeon cinema which has now been converted into a big store, there was the Plaza cinema er which was pulled down again it's part-of a store, there was the Palladium cinema near the promenade that-closed down and became a gymnasium then up on to the promenade itself there was the Winter Gardens which is still there but... virtually derelict, further along the Empire cinema which is pulled down for another building, further along there was a dance hall called the Floral Hall which is no longer there, past that there was another cinema called the Arcadian, no longer there and past that there was another cinema called the Whitehall which was rebuilt as a mega-zone and last year it burnt down, so that's a total wreck then further along at a place called the Battery Point there was another cinema there called the Palace and that's no longer there oh and also in the centre of town, behind the Winter Gardens area, that was a funfair, of course that's no longer there either, it's a big car park and Morecambe Festival market and further along again we had the area that the Empire and the Arcadian, that was West End funfair and of course that's no longer there.

But despite lots of things being lost you still really enjoy living here?

Oh yeh, yeh , well I know so many people, I mean there's loads of people that I went to school with, yeh yer know both men and women yeh

And when you look back on your life and your achievements and you know all your involvement in fishing and as a fisheries officer, are you happy with what you look back on?

Oh yeh, yeh I mean, it's virtually dead, nowhere to go, nothing to do, it's as easy as that.

Is there anything else that you'd like to....?

Uhh no not really I think we have covered...we seem to have covered practically all of it

Lovely, thank you very much

OK

Ends

Track 2

So the other thing we were going to cover was your interests in dialects. Local dialects, can you just tell me a bit about that.

Well when I was brought up as a bairn everybody spoke dialect, in fact if didn't you were sort of looked down on as a bit of a toff so everybody talked gradely.

And you yourself have written some books connected to local dialect.

Yes.

Can you just tell me what those are?

Well they are more or less a dialect dictionary, well I call it summat about Old Morecambe which is something about Old Morecambe in English and everybody spoke pretty much the same, in fact roundabout the local area and across the other side of the bay at Grange and Flookburgh and places like that. I mean that

there were slight differences obviously in the pronunciation in what you were talking about but quite a lot of them were the same, like for instance 'a brat', now a lot of people say that a brat is an unruly child but here in Morecambe and the other side of the bay a brat was what we called a fisherman's apron, a waterproof apron that you wore when you were fishing.

With the same spelling?

Oh aye b r a t brat and if you fell you tummeled or tumbled.

Yeh, I've heard that one, "I've tummeled over".

Yeh, o'er, tummeled o'er right. You could also tummel in watter, watter being water.

And how did it connect with um when you were out fishing and things, what fishing terms did you use?

Err....all sorts.....they just come out of your mouth, er..... Well er let's think of summat.....of course the obvious thing was you worked on watter and er in the main the actual fishing activities themselves were pretty national, anyway, and er well an oer is an oar, chuck is to throw, really quite a lot of them involved in the fishing activities itself were pretty national language any way, or a buet (ph) is a boat.

And did you have nicknames for er some of the equipment you used?

No, not really not that I can think of er.

Like the boats, weren't they called nobbies ?

That was the local name for the type of boat, Nobbies, they were built at Crossfield's boatyard at Arnside, nearly all of them were built up there anyway, but a boat was a buet, simple as that (cough) and er as I said there was an oer that was an oar, not much else I can think of.

Have you got anything you can recite to me there in local dialect?

Not really, I'm not very good at reciting I'm afraid.

If I ask you a couple of questions and you respond to me in dialect?

Well go on.

So um how are you today Keith?

Oh gradely.

And er tell me about your life in fishing.

Oh, that was gradely 'n all, gradely being good. Or proper

And what did you used to do when you were out on the boats fishing?

Nothing particularly, you know, there was no dialect words that I was up for with it to be honest... 'nd er it was mainly just ordinary speaking word that was all, er in fact brat is t' only one I can remember, oh another one, gansey that was a fisherman's jersey, a gansey.

So what is the difference between a fisherman's jersey and an old person's jersey?

Just the name, that's all, well apart from a gansey it was a [thingy] neck, it didn't have a v-shaped collar or owt like that in it, just a round neck. Easy as that.

And knitted so that it kept you warm when you were out there?

Yeh, oh yeh, Well you had two types of gansey, one was a winter gansey, you know, kept you warm, and then you had a summer gansey that was a bit lighter, as easy as that, and I should say that 90% of them had been knitted by the family, easy as that.

And was there any other particular attire that er fishermen used to wear?

Well obviously there was a jacket, that was your waterproof overcoat, you know, made out of canvas, latterly as time went on made out of plastic, that was about it, and er oh thigh boots, long boots that came up to your thighs and that was that.

Lovely, thank you.

ENDS

Interviewer Jenn Mattinson

Interviewee Keith Willacy

[End of tape]