



**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

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INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Marc Overett
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INTERVIEWER/S: Marion Dawson & Cynthia (Tinnie) Naylor
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Could you please tell us your full name and date of birth?

Yep..My name is Marc Overett and my date of birth is 15th January 1967.

Well, we're looking to collect memories of yourself or even what you remember as a child, going back to your parents. If we can start with your early life and your family background?

Yeh, sure, when my mum and dad met, my dad was a fisherman and he remained a fisherman while I was born etc. so growing up with my dad being a fisherman we were quite heavily involved in, so, at an age of probably three or four onwards because the garage was a fisherman's store rather than a garage for a car, it had nets, spares, mending tools and all the maintenance for the boat would be done by my dad anyway. It would be a family occasion to paint the boat in summer and he had a diesel tank in the back garden which he used to fill a five gallon drum and decant into that to use as the fuel for the day, for the boat, so the whole house, the whole environment was fishing.

Where about did you live at this time?

Burlington Avenue, it's just off Lancaster Road so obviously we didn't have a car, it was a van so that carried the fish in the back.

You fished in Morecambe bay?

My dad was fisherman in Morecambe bay.

So where was the jetty?

By Central Pier, the landing stage used to called, there's a slipway and to the right of the slipway was a landing stage, a wooden landing stage so you could rope, skull up to it [...]

Could you tell us about your family life, what was going on at home, you said a little bit there but when your dad went away, did he go away for days or did he go away for weeks?

No it was pretty tidal and it was early starts and back so he would be 3am to 3pm so as kids my dad was in.....we used to think he was in bed a lot but he was actually because he was starting work, going fishing the early hours of the morning so we had to be very quiet on certain occasions, the week-ends were good, you know, he used to bring the shrimps home because he used to catch them and boil them on the boat and er bring them back and my mum and another woman, because we used to come home from school, primary school, and my mum and another woman would be sat round picking the shrimps, so we used to get a sandwich every day when we came home from school.

What does picking the shrimps actually mean?

No it's, it's actually de-shelling them it was quite an easy technique of holding the tail, twisting around the head area and if you got it off to a T, you got the perfect shrimp in one and there wasn't anything, there was a bit of technique.

OK, so sometimes it could be really [...]?

Yeh...yeh, like us as kids tried to pick them and [...] them and mess them.

Did you do that as kids?

Yeh...yeh, well... soon got bored of it but we used to do it, we used to enjoy the sandwiches.

So, were the shrimps sold fresh or were they frozen?

No no they were sold fresh. There was ... it was called... it was on Green Street, the trawlers.

Was it called Morecambe Bay Trawlers then?

Yeh, yeh and I think, well we used to go with my dad there and take the shrimps and put them in fridges there then sold on the next day.

Would the go to market inland as well or just markets at Morecambe?

I believe that they did have buyers from outside of Morecambe, definitely, but obviously we were pretty young, we didn't really get involved in that part. One thing that during our primary school years dad had a boat built, it was at Kellet & Milner's yard which was near the police station at Morecambe, Morecambe police station, I think you can still walk through that area now there's geese on one side, 'cos we always remembered the geese being in a field but he actually had a boat built there from scratch then launched it near the town hall, Morecambe town hall.

How do you mean "launched it "

Well you know, it was brand spanking new, it was taken to the slipway and literally launched with a bit of a fanfare and the Visitor and press were there.

What was the name of the boat?

He named after my younger brother, the Mark Anthony, which the boat is still around but it's in the Wirral so I believe.

What! still fishing?

Yeh. My dad had quite a lot to do with the design of it as well...so he...before he'd married my mum he'd been deep sea but prior to that his early life was fishing and getting involved with the fishermen, but then he went deep sea and came back inshore fishing, but he brought some of the experiences, techniques of the deep sea back here with him to utilise in inshore fishing.

What techniques were those?

Well, there never used to be what's called a landing boom, it was more of a cargo ship idea but it was, he utilised it on the boat he had built and now when you see all the boats out there they've all got this derrick, this small derrick, and it's just an aid for heaving nets up where before it used to be done by hand and was quite labour intensive. This took the labour out of everything, well no. it was a block and tackle and it was at a height, so you've got your height and then you just heaved on this with purchase through a block and tackle. I mean I could illustrate that for you but it's a bit difficult to explain, it's basically like a block and tackle on the... you've got your mast there and off the mast was a small derrick.

What's a derrick?

It's just a small, it's like a crane arm if you will and it will move around the side of the ship, it's stuck to the mast but it will move 180 deg. So you can lift from both sides or in the centre of the deck.

It's..it's lifting stuff.

Yeh, it's a way of getting the cod end of the net.

The what?

The cod end.

The cod end!

The cod end is the final part of the net where all the fish gather.

You know you said you boiled them on the boat, what was your fuel?

Gas.

And so yeh but was that dangerous?

Yeh

Gas on a wooden boat?

It was in the wheelhouse sorry it was just at the back of the wheelhouse so they'd use sea water and they'd put in on pretty much as they left so it would take an hour or so to heat up and it would be a case of riddling the catch to just...get, so you'd lose all your small shrimps, put them back and then the bigger shrimps, the keepers were boiled instantly.

And is it boiled, are they plunged in water or are they actually cooked?

They go in and basically they'll turn brown.

So how long are they in for?

Minutes, a matter of minutes.

What's the reason for boiling them on the boat?

I think it's just a process you know it more a preservation process, I think they'll last a lot longer than the [...]s ready for the next process of picking so that was just a generic thing that everybody did you know. You wouldn't any raw shrimps or anything like that, but I did used to go out from probably the age of five onwards, you used to get told not to pick up weaver fish, they can give you a nasty, they've got spines that carry a poison so you're told not to pick them up.

They'd be in the net as well would they?

Yeh, you'd catch plaice, small plaice, flounders, all types of flat fish, not so much round fish like whiting, cod and stuff.

Did your dad just fish for shrimps or?

No, he did whitebait in winter and shrimps in summer.

OK, just those two things?

Yeh it's a different technique white baiting rather than trawling for shrimps, white baiting...you actually anchor and you put a net over the side in the flow of the tide so the net...the shoals swim into it if you know where know where the shoals swim, it was a pretty.

So you need to know?

Yeh you need to know the ground, you do for shrimping anyway ... with it being as low horsepower and small nets that just rip to pieces easy if you went on any rough ground.

When you were growing up were you, did you feel you were part of fishing community?

Oh yeh and not only that I mean we'd be at home playing out with the neighbours kid and everything and he'd bring fish home and cook it for everybody in the street, so all the neighbours kids would come, anybody that was there would help themselves to the whitebait and shrimps and things, yeh so it was a good community,

And and did you have friends that you socialised with that were fishermen as well?

Well yeh..I mean..there was another lad at school with me, the same year, his dad was a fisherman so we had something in common there and we did used to spend a lot of time, myself and my brother spent the majority of the summer holidays at..at the central pier so we knew all the fishermen and you know we'd dash around there and help them when they came in and things like that...Yeh, it was a good community spirit.

Tell us about which school you went to, I'm intrigued.

Lancaster Road primary school, basically at the top of the road.

When, as you grow than and you're going to school was there any point you thought you were going to be a fisherman or maybe I'm not going to be a fisherman, or was it in the blood?

Yeh...yeh, as I grew up into my teens my dad moved up a size of vessel so he kind of moved out of the inshore, Morecambe bay, and went further afield so then he went from being one or two handed to four handed on the boat so yeh it was very interesting and that in fact is exactly what I did yeh.

And did you and your brother follow your dad in that way, go and help him and then....?

Yeh...yeh we both started, I think my brother, he actually started from Fleetwood on the deep sea trawlers to Rockall and things like that but he came back down to inshore, relatively inshore but we ended up both of us working on Irish trawlers, Kilkeel, and Whitehaven and up the Scottish coast and things.

Can I sort of bring you back and think what the first things you did when you first went to work with your dad, were there any things that was your job or did you help with everything, or did you have specific jobs on the boat?

Yeh..I mean I suppose at seventeen pretty much did everything on the boat so when we went myself and my brother went on to other trawlers we pretty much made a mate straight away of the ship because we knew all the ins and outs of steering and navigation, things like that.

I'd like to ask you about how you found your way around the sands and....what about the just...knowledge?

It was just natural because you grew up your dad said don't go over there, don't do this, do that so really became second nature you know...you didn't really have to think about it.

And did you know where the specific channels were?

Yeh.

So you'd know where to go for shrimps, where the shrimps were.

Yeh.

How did you know that?

Well, well it's funny because they don't on the bigger boats you actually, you actually like make a graph of it, of the fishing ground, but in the small inshore boats you used landmarks against other landmarks so when you see two points crossed like that or in line you knew when to put your net out and then you'd have other marks, landmarks that you knew when to turn round and come back on yourself because it would be rough ground beyond that, so if it was foggy there was a problem, but you could find your way back to your mooring but was er fishing was about landmarks, in the early days obviously we had no GPS and things like that it was just...yeh that's exactly what it was.

So when you were going you with your dad as a kid it would have been by landmarks on that?

Oh yeh, sure you know.. it was all passed down, say you know when you get the clock tower in line with something else when the two line up that's when you put your nets out, you know it was along those lines.

OK, it's about fixed by eye then?

Oh Yeh

So you needed to have a good eye then?

Yeh...yeh

And you'd always be aware of how much time you had because of tides changing, the tides turning?

Yeh..yeh?

That was all in your head as well?

Yeh..yeh that was all, it was something that you didn't really think about, again because you were working with somebody experienced and it just became second nature. So I think there was a lot of history passed down, knowledge passed down from the guys in the early days and er.

Do you remember anything at this side of Morecambe where they used to put the nets out?

The set nets, well funnily enough yes because I used to help the guy who owned the baulks, it was called the baulks and um they were at the west end of.....they were staked out and I think they used larch and they would weave a channel that starts potentially 400 metres at the mouth of it and then it would work into a fish trap at the end which was basically a box, a meshed box that you could actually walk into and I used to go out with a guy on a tractor when the tide had gone out to recoup, it was a V and there were actually wooden stakes and then it was interwoven with a larch.

So how long would that, what did you call it the whole thing set?

The baulks

The baulks, so how many days would they stay there?

Well, you could go every tide once the tide had gone out you could drive down on your tractor and then wade into the pound at the end, the fish pound, and the just recoup.

So they were strong enough not to be washed away by the tide?

Yeh they were permanent, a permanent fixture, it was interwoven wood. I mean I don't think, well you can't see any evidence of it now but I'm probably talking eighties..... oh yeh for sure seventies maybe er yeh maybe seventy five – seventy six.

That's when you were working on them?

Yeh...well the guy across the road, his dad, they were his dad's, he was an Aldren, they are a fishing family in Morecambe bay, so he used to go out on his tractor and I used to go with him. And I worked with them for a few years as a hobby.

I was going to say you didn't get paid for that then?

They used to bung me this and that you know but generally it was just a hobby, so I really enjoyed it yeh. We actually spent the summer repairing it all. That's why now they got the wood, basically it was just trees that had been felled and stripped with the branches and then they were interwoven basically, into the....maybe twenty feet long.

So that would be built out there on the sands?

There would be stakes and then you'd just interweave this larch.

So it's all made of wood and that used to trap the fish?

Yeh.. that would be a permanent fixture and then in the end, at the very end it'd be, they would actually used netting in the box area, but the box area was the size of this room.

Are there any other types of fishing that you remember, or that you haven't mentioned that you could tell us about that went on?

Well, there was musseling and a lot of guys used to do that, they used to use them.

Mussel beds on this side of the bay?

Yeh...yeh sure they used to catch them, well they used to rake them and then, on the jetty there used to be a pool where a particular guy used to put them in fresh water and then they'd open up over twenty four hours and get rid of any sand that were in the mussels.

So you just leave them in water?

Yeh, he'd leave them there and they basically just clean themselves out.

So that was people you knew that were [..] but you weren't?

No, I didn't get involved in with those guys but we knew the whole community that fishing [...].

So your dad was doing shrimping in summer and whitebait in the winter?

Yeh, and flat fish, he did end particularly going for flat fish and Dover Sole, when he got the big new boat built, because it was slightly bigger and he could go slightly further afield, so he'd actually trawl off Blackpool coast, that's where he'd catch Dover Soles and Plaice.

Within Morecambe bay it was shrimp and whitebait?

Yeh.. he would get the odd flat fish but as a rule, you wouldn't make a living out of flat fish from Morecambe.

Again, was that marketed locally?

Yes..yes.

When you said the trawlers that you um used to take the fish to was called Morecambe Trawlers or something, was that a co-operative?

I think it was, you know, it was a co-operative I mean an ex-fisherman managed it and Sam Baxter, I don't know if anybody has mentioned his name, well he managed it and everybody had a key and I think they just, him and other people managed the sales side of it. So as fishermen all they would do is go in, use the scales, use the facilities to wash the fish and then refrigerate it and put their name or the ship's name on their particular boxes of fish, so that they knew what weight they had and what quality of fish it was, whether it was small, large plaice etc you know.

So how did you define the quality of.....?

The quality, actually they would use the word grade, you know, grade the fish.

Was that for size or whatever?

Yes, because there would be a price difference in theand then we did used to catch lobster by accident, lobsters have got migration and they migrate as a group, in a line, so that it wasn't uncommon during these migration periods to catch four or five of them in one go, and we used to sell those to the local restaurants.

So that would be a delicacy then, would it?

Not for us, I would go to local restaurants. We'd actually go and just knock on the door and say would you like to buy

So did you get quite?

But no, it was quite far and few between but we did have them.

Did you get a good price for them when you did get them?

Yeh, yeh it was cash in the pocket or even bring your family in for a meal or something like that, you know it wasn't always a cash deal, it was come in next week tom the restaurant.

Did you have to have a license for certain fish?

I think my dad would have had a license, definitely for the bigger boat for sure because would had to buy, you had to purchase a license for the boat, but I'm not sure about Morecambe Bay, not too sure about that side of it. As an adult I did not fish in Morecambe Bay.

Can you remember any sort of specific incidents or accidents or anything that were in your mind at all?

Well, dad was the coxswain of the lifeboat so we, he used to be called out by three rockets going off, so as kids we remember.

Is coxswain another name of the captain?

Yes (laugh) so um.. fishing I mean, no I mean he did lose a friend through fishing locally and he did go out looking for him and we were all aware of that, we all gathered on the Central Pier area hoping that they would find him but they didn't find him.

In a storm?

There was an accident while he was whitebait fishing and I think he was heaving the net in by hand and he fell in, with having waders on they would fill up instantly and straight down, he did take that as a bit of a blow.

And with something like that, the community would stick together?

Oh yeh, sure, absolutely.

Did he leave a wife or ...?

He had a brother that fished, so he left his brother yeh. From a community aspect in summer they did bring the boats further in onto the beach, let the tide go out then the whole family would get involved in painting and scrubbing the boat, put anti-fouling on it.

Anti-fouling, what's anti-fouling?

It's, you get weed growing below the water line so that slows to boat down and you burn more diesel, so every summer you'd bring the boat in, you'd put weight to one side so that it listed and dry out that side so you'd scrub all the weed off, barnacles off and then you'd paint it with anti-fouling and when the tide came you'd put the weights on the opposite side then do the other side the day after and I mean pretty much in summer August, September, it was a tradition that everybody did that, then my mum, everybody would get involved.

What did your mum do in the family when you were growing up?

She worked at the Job Centre in Queen Street but as I say she used to pick the shrimps.

So was she working full time or part time?

When we were young she didn't work, when we got a bit older she started work but she did used to pick the shrimps when we were toddlers and then waste, with the sloughs (ph.).

What's a slough (ph.)?

It's a picked... it's a head and tail of a shrimp that's been picked so it's redundant, the meat's been picked and your left with er the shell of the head and the empty shell of the tail, so that would accumulate massively compared to the amount of shrimps.

So what happen to that, what did you do with it?

You actually just drive to the promenade and dump it over the side, but that was the done thing.

So did the sea gulls attack it?

Yeh, yeh so they were called sloughs (ph).

You mentioned waders earlier on, what would you wear on a boat?

You wore waders because you had to wade out to the rowing boat, the punts, possible up to that high, the thigh so that was just part of your kit that you wore.

What else did you wear?

Well, going back then I think my dad had a sou'wester believe it or not that used to, not like now you can get light-weight 'bib'n brace' and a jacket, it was a very heavy oilskin, very heavy, because I remember as a kid it was awful [...] you had to near enough oil it ...a jacket.

You had to oil it?

Yeh, to keep it waterproof, that's where the name oilskins come from?

So what sort of oil would you use on it?

I don't know what kind of oil they used on it, it would make it a very heavy piece of kit you know compared to....

Did they have them in children's sizes didn't they?

No...no , you'd have to walk around in bigger wellies [laugh], put three pairs of socks on and we also used to help him mend the nets because he'd bring the nets home in his van if he ripped it over rocky ground or something like that, we'd have to hold the net in certain areas while he mended it.

Is there something about dipping the nets in tar?

Yeh, but I don't know about that.

A long time ago?

It was actually nylon, was it nylon, *polyurethane* (ph) maybe.

It would make it much stronger?

Yeh, it didn't need dipping no.

So that's going back to the older net?

Yeh, it would likely to rot quickly.

Sorry for my ignorance, could you just explain the difference then between the fishing for shrimps and the fishing for whitebait because you said...well you explained the technique for the whitebait?

Yeh, shrimps is actually trawler, you actually trawling the bottom, so the net actually dredges the bottom, you would hope that it digs into sand, maybe a couple of inches and that being towed would er bounce the shrimps into the back of the net.

Being towed?

Yeh, you wouldn't be stationary, you'd pull that net so the shrimps would be pretty scattered across a sandy area, the you'd just tow your net across the sandy area.

Are there crabs in Morecambe Bay?

Yeh and um some that you have to be very careful of called "Bolton Billies" because if they nipped you they didn't let go. It was a hard lesson as a kid. They actually swim the crabs, they used to have the back legs if I can remember rightly were more paddles than legs but everybody called them "Bolton Billies", I don't know what the proper name is for them.

I'm just going back to the stalls that used be round the Central Pier you know with the crabs, mussels.....?

Those size crabs are, I don't think really were caught here. I think you're talking lobster pots for those crabs, these crabs were only two to three inches.

So they used to get caught in the shrimp nets, and then you'd have to watch out?

You got those and you got weaver fish that were sting fish that were pretty dangerous.

So it's a very labour intensive industry really, I mean all hands to the deck, everybody had to chip in?

You know if it was bad weather there was no pay, or if it was poor fishing you'd go out for the day and come back empty not covering the price of your diesel, it was by no means a guaranteed living .

Well, I just going ask that, what sort of standard of living did it give you.I mean as a child you're not sure but as reflection?

Obviously I think in the Sixties and Seventies going on holiday wasn't really, going abroad wasn't really the done thing but I think we did alright, apart from that we didn't want for anything I don't think as kids, although we weren't spoilt, I'm not saying that.

I can only presume that from what you've said is that you went into the fishing industry and it became a career, you lifetime's career. Where was your next move after that, after being at Morecambe and being with your dad?

Well actually I did join my dad but he moved up the scale and he was working on .bigger trawlers basing himself in Scotland .

So what did you do then?

I was with him

Oh you were with him?

And the industry started to peter off completely so for owners and things that, people had been encouraged to decommission and sell their licences so my dad decided to get out of it. He pursued a career with supply boats and thing like that, my brother and I went and joined Irish Trawlers in Whitehaven, so we fished for prawns in summer and round fish in winter which was pretty good because it was the Irish Sea and the other side of the Isle of Man around Kilkeel and things like that.

So when you say that the industry petered out do you mean throughout the UK or?

No no this coast, the west coast, I mean from Scotland probably from the Mull of Galloway down. You know this Fleetwood is desolate now, it's like a ghost town there's no money in fishing in this area, the only people that make a living in fishing now is Peterhead and places like that. They're the only guys that are doing anything.

So why did that change, how did that come about?

Well, I mean, you could say that it's been played out completely, overfished you know.

When did quotas first start coming in?

They came in when probably, I'm pretty sure they were in in the Eighties, late Eighties, but you know it has just got worse and worse. When the EU um became the EU, that allowed Spanish and everything else to come into our waters.

I remember the Icelandic

Yeh, the big hoo-hah, that was the Cod Wars then.

So I suppose that if you didn't have big enough boats to go out to where the fish were or into the bigger fish, that it wasn't financially worthwhile?

No,no, and I believe now they can't fish for whitebait now because the industry demands that they are individually frozen for sale.

On the boat?

Well, you have to have the facilities to individually freeze them, we didn't do that, we just landed them whole, refrigerated them and sold on, but now demand requires that individually.

What do you mean 'individually'?

It means you could open your freezer and pick five out if you want or they are not in a block. It's not worth doing, and I believe the prices for fish is horrendous at the moment, prices have gone out of the market, dad was telling me that some Fleetwood guys that he knows were...er went out last week and they got 1980's pay, prices for the fish so um we did get out of it eventually me and my brother...but all the boats that we worked on have all been de-commissioned and there is no fishing fleet as such, well there is, Peterhead and Frazerburgh, places like that in Scotland.

What does de-commissioned mean?

Basically you're paid to break your boat down, strip your machinery off the deck, deck machinery, stuff like that. Sell your license.

You're paid by who?

The government as an incentive will give you a decent wage for your boat for them to scrap it basically. As an incentive.

Because they don't want people to fish?

Well, the industry is that bad they supported people by offering de-commissioning grants.

Is there anything else that we have missed that you want to put in that we should have been asking about and haven't?

From a leisure side, as a family we did used to go across to Peel in the summer holidays on the boat and take the dog as well, that was a good fun.

Is that your dad or you with your children, or your dad with you?

No my dad, us children, my mum and the dog. Other than that I think we've pretty much covered stuff.

What was it that you liked about fishing, you enjoyed about it?

I don't know, it's not a job it's a way of life to be honest, you certainly wouldn't be in it for the money, although when it got to a point where you can't live, that's when we said enough is enough, but no it's just a great way of life, fulfilling you know.

What do you think is fulfilling about it, what makes it..... ?

Erm, you spend a day at sea, quite exhilarating, weather is never the same, the sea can be fantastic, you never know what you're going to catch, there's all these uncertainties and then when you do get back in it's great, the feeling of coming home again or going ashore after being out all day is great.

It's a combination of physical work, and you've got a fair degree of mental work, sorting it all out and being keeping safe really?

Steering the ship and on the bigger boats I've seen quite a few accidents, you know people that have gone over the side, scary.

Because they just weren't aware of the dangers?

Well the weather picked up in this particular instance here, near enough a hurricane and the skipper had left it too late, he thought it was going to tow him in to the land, get a lee from the hills but that didn't happen, so mountainous seas that we had to bring the net in and that nearly took a guy over the side, it was a case of scramble it in best you can, don't worry about the fish, don't worry about anything just get the net in and then we'll head for shelter, proper shelter.

So 'lee' is what? A shelter?

You could be under the land where the wind is blowing over the top of it, you can be underneath this a couple of miles where the sea state is not affective.

Were you aware at this time of the cocklers, going out with the boards and suchlike, was that more Hest Bank way?

It wasn't like its gone now with gang masters and foreigners, people being utilised for it but cocklers was an individual thing.

From all the little villages around?

My dad showed me how to do it, you can just go and you traipse the sand in [...] bellies, what you'd call it and the cockles would just come up but commercially now I wasn't aware as a kid of people doing that.

But you knew people who did it individually?

They'd actually go and sell it on their own stall.

But they weren't doing that for a living, like an additional thing or they were doing it as a ?

Yeh, well I think they were buying certain elements of er.. that they were selling on, as they were, walking down Morecambe prom, but they'd make an effort to catch some of it themselves.

Where are we at, anything else, I feel that here must be loads of things, it depends on. What time is it? It's gone just after seven , not bad is it?

That's fine, I just er, I'm pretty sure there's lots of things but I'm restricting it to Morecambe Bay I've just got to keep it to pretty much my....from eleven or twelve downwards you see.

So you were eleven or twelve when your dad got the bigger boat?

Yeh

That is quite restrictive, you've done well, it's amazing that what you remember because you remember it because you did it day in and day out and you were with him on the boat. So did you get, this is what I wanted to ask, did you get up at 3am, at what age were you.

Well four or five.

Really, you got up at 3am and went out on the boat with him, and how many people would be on the boat?

Just me and my dad.

Right, OK.

So it was great

So it was a one man?

In the small boat yes it was a one man affair 'cos he could pull the net in by hand and then that's why he created the derrick on the second boat, it went up a size, the net was bigger, so everything labour intensive wise went, increased yeh

So that was when he built the derrick?

Yeh...yeh.

So was he still on his own in the bigger boat?

Er, no I think he um got another hand because he did go further afield, he went to Blackpool and round to Millom, places like that, although still fishing the Bay.

At the same time?

Yeh...if it was pretty poor he would go further afield and I think it was roundabout those days that VHF's, he actually got a VHF for the boat.

What is a VHF?

A high frequency radio, pretty much it's actually standard now that everybody's got them, even pleasure boats but in the early days there was no communication between vessels of that size. They might pass each other and say "How you doing" and it was "well not too bad but I wouldn't bother going any further" and stuff like that.

You'd pass on knowledge about where the fish were?

Well VHF certainly did, that's when that community thing did come in, community spirit.

So that was only when he got the bigger boat that he got the VHF?

Yeh...yeh, now it's ...no before there was no VHF, the only piece of electronic equipment that he had was er probably an echo sounder, but that no he didn't have any to start with, none. Eventually he got an echo sounder which will tell you the depth of where you are, the depth water that you're in and then he progressed to having a VHF.

So how does the echo sounder work?

It tells you how deep the water is below you.

How does it do that though or do you....?

It pings a signal through to the bottom of the little timer and it will give you a display in fathoms or metres or whatever you want, but before that on the smaller boat it was a lead line.

What's that?

It was a piece of lead on the end of a line, you'd throw it over the side and then you'd count in in fathoms, a fathom's your arms outstretched, so that's one fathom, a fathom is about six feet, so you could actually

So was that to help you know where you were?

Well, it would gauge the amount of water that you were in, to do what you wanted to do and whether you needed to turn back and get out of there. So you'd gauge how deep it was and then you'd know how much rope to let out for your net and things like that.

So each fishing trip was just the tide, the length of the tide and then back?

Yeh, in the small boat in Morecambe Bay yeh, you wouldn't stay out no [...], because you'd get that days catch, there was no fridge facilities, there was nothing whatsoever, you'd just have baskets on deck so you'd just load your punt, rowing, sculling actually.

What's that?

Sculling is just, you scull from the back of a rowing boat, stood up with one oar, basically you make a figure of eight with the....and it will propel you along, with the oar yeh, it's called sculling.

So that's how you get out to the boat?

Yeh...yeh, because your boat would be moored off the pier and the you'd wade out to your punt with your waders on.

A punt is a rowing boat? Yeh

So we'd...dad used to set a gas bottle that we used for the shrimps and then he'd put an oar in there at home, in the yard and teach us how to scull, so that we could put it into practice when we actually got on to the boat, but no it was great fun.

So you were doing that at three or four were you?

Well slightly older (laugh),

It might have been playtime really

Yeh, it was, the beach, on the beach every day it was great.

So this is all around the Central Pier area where all this was going on ?

And not only that, my Nana had a shop across the road, so we'd go there for lunch.

What sort of shop did she have?

A jewellers shop.

It's like most of the....when you look at the history of the fishing, all those little cottages round Poulton, Green Street and Poulton Square, of course they've got those fabulous painting on the wall now, it's really good.

Yeh, that is great and the Smugglers.

Yeh, near the Smugglers of course it's lovely.

Well that was a haunt of my dad's, we used to have to go in there and get him out.

Did you?

And the Morecambe Hotel...[laughs]

How old were you when you did that?

Probably about twelve [laughs]

Really?

Ten or twelve year old yeh. Can you go and find your dad? {laughs}

So how many days a week did he fish then, I was wondering that?

Well yeh, it wasn't a five day week thing, no, I think he pretty much did six days on and a day off.

So the day off was in the pub then..... (laughs)

Too much, by dinnertime he'd been out, we didn't see much of that.

So it was 3am 'til 3pm.

He did the twelve hours yeh.

Six days a week?

A tide yeh

All the year round ?

If the weather permitted yeh.

And how often would you go out with him?

Er, in the summer holidays and any other holidays, you know at an early age maybe a couple of times a week, but that progressed to near enough a lot of the summer holidays.

Did you choose to do that or was there a bit of pressure?

No, no pressure at all no, I chose to do it, but my brother and I actually did it to catch whitebait inshore at the beach, there was a pool next to the slipway in the wooden jetty, the landing stage. They called it the landing stage because that's where you'd land your fish, you'd row up to it and put fish on there, you'd take your boat back to its mooring then wade in yourself and then you'd just haul your fish down to your van, but there used to be a pool at the end with a..... it used to attract whitebait so we used to gather that and maybe sell about, catch about half a basket.

How old were you then?

Primary school age.

At its busiest time like that, how many boats were actually fishing.....how many Morecambe boats would there be going out when you were.....what sort of numbers are we talking about?

Probably about eight, eight to ten.

Not that many.

Now there's none, maybe only one and he's...he lives in Poulton Square and he's got the shop, so he sells it himself.

That's the shop on the corner?

Yeh

I know the one you mean but I can't remember what it's called. Baxter's used to have a yard at the.... going towards the pond, is that there or has that gone now, it used to have big double doors.

I think that's gone yeh.....[...] called Willacy, yeh they are called Willacy's but um you have a good time interviewing him (laughs)

Thank you Marc. I was just wondering, I'm just trying to picture a typical day really from three 'til three, just quickly can you say?

You'd start because you'd want to catch the flood tide um, so the tide would be coming in, you'd go as early as possible when your punt was afloat so you'd wade out, you'd get into your

As soon as punt was afloat?

Then you could make for your boat, you'd leave your punt at the mooring and let go then you'd go off fishing and then that twelve hour cycle of the tide rise and fall you'd make it back for the last point possible.

So how many times would you tow, tow the nets over?

You'd bring it in pretty much... er....every forty minutes.

Ok,ok so that's basically [...] you'd go through that process?

Yeh, yeh, I mean you've got steaming time you'd go to the ground and it might take you an hour or something, You'd set your nets up, chuck it out, it wasn't as intense as it sounds.

It wasn't?

Well you'd pull the net in, you'd empty your cod end, you'd riddle your shrimps and then you'd chuck your net back out again and then you'd end up on a little cycle like that, but it was, you'd get your lunch, I think you could heat a kettle up and then you'd have a sandwich, you certainly wouldn't have anything hot unless it was boilable.

Because you didn't have any other....?

There was no stove or anything.

Um....so um...would you boil the shrimps after you've put the net back down again?

Yeh

So you'd be doing that while you're towing?

Yeh,...one of my main jobs was as a boy was to pump the boat out because all wooden boats leak, so there'd be a hand pump that you'd have to pump the boat bilges out, it would take you ages (laughs) so that was one of my main focuses and letting go of the mooring while my dad was manouevering the boat.

What's that?

The mooring that where its permanent mooring when you come in and go out you've got a mooring so he'd fire the boat up, get the engine warm and he'd say you can let go so then he can navigate to the ground.

What does that mean "Navigate to the ground"?

Navigate to the fishing ground.

Ah ok.

You just steer the boat to the.....

You mentioned ground before. Were the shrimps or the whitebait always in the same place or did they move around?

Yeh...they moved around and um a lot of it was trial and error, so if he was poor after a tow in one area he could move to another area and he could see how it compared, so yeh, it wasn't a set A..B..C at all.

It just depended on ?

Yeh.

END

Interviewer Marion Dawson & Cynthia (Tinnie) Naylor

Interviewee Marc Overett