



MORECAMBE BAY PARTNERSHIP
HEADLANDS TO HEADSPACE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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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: H2H2015.5
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Jean Dennis and Barbara Dawe
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1937 and 1945
INTERVIEWER/S: Jenn Mattinson
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LOCATION: Bolton-le-Sands
TRANSCRIBER: Marion Dawson

Summary of Interview:

No of Tracks: 4

Main Contents of Transcript (Brief Description):

Track 1: Childhood, family members and their roles and occupations
Track 2: Teenage years, adulthood, work, moving away, going fishing with dad
Track 3: Accidents, other fishing families, social activities, fishing processes, picking, women's role, supplementary income, cross-bay swim
Track 4: Dick Woodhouse (reputation), lifeboats, accidents, health, Sea Cadets happiest memories, changes in the industry and area

So first of all erm can I just get you both to tell me your names and your date of birth if that's OK, if it's not too cheeky? (both laugh)

J That's fine, Jean Dennis, 13.12.1937.

B Barbara Dawe, 14.08.1945.

Great and erm, and you're sisters?

B Yes.

So I'm not very good maths, what's the age gap then between you?

B About seven and a half years, isn't it? Just under seven and a half years.

J Yes yes yes. About that, hmm.

And where were you born?

J I was born here in Bolton-le-Sands at the end house on this row.

OK and could you just describe where we are?

J Yes surely. We're on Town End Bolton-le-Sands which is a cul-de-sac between the A6 and the Lancaster Kendal canal and we're about a five or six minute walk from the middle of the village.

And where were you born Barbara?

B Same house (laughs). Yes the same house so...

J Yeah.

B You've got the information about Town End from my sister but of course then we, we had a long garden didn't we then? (J Mm). But they took some of that. They built the A6 didn't they because they bought some land and built the A6 and then somebody took some more land but we had quite a big long garden there.

And so that was your family house erm so how long did you live there for roughly?

B That was the grandparents' house wasn't it?

J Yes.

B They had a shop didn't they?

J Yes.

B They had a little shop, my mother's parents had a little shop and...

J And our grandma's parents lived in this house and there was a barn in between because this was the old farm and the, I'm trying to think, I can't think quite when we moved. I was at the grammar school.

B Well we moved to Townley Street because Mummy, when her parents died, Mummy only had one sister Edna. And there was enough money, fortunately, for Mummy to buy a house nearer to where my dad's boat was in Morecambe. We'd be... it must have been about 1951 because I'd started school.

J Yes.

B I'd just started school nicely, hadn't I? So I started when I was about 5. It must have been about '51. We were definitely there when the King died.

J Yes, we were, yes. And then we moved to Morecambe, which was quite a surprise really, living in Morecambe, after living in Bolton-le-Sands.

So what kind of age were you then? Did you have most of your childhood brought up in Morecambe then?

B I did. Jean was...

J I think I had much stronger ties to here, this place, really. Because I'd been at primary school here, and things like Guides and Sunday School and everything. So I think I was much more focused on Bolton-le-Sands.

B And yet I... I went to... I used to get the bus every day to and from Bolton-le-Sands primary school, because I'd started. And I joined the Guides there, didn't I?

J Yes.

B I'd joined Bolton-le-Sands Guides.

J We did keep that, yes.

B So we kept the connection with the village for a while. Jean more so than me. But we did. And my auntie lived just further down the A6. Anyway, so we came up a lot to see her, you see.

So you had a lot of extended family around the area.

B Oh, yes.

So if you could, 'cause I'm sort of trying to get to grips with who's who... if you could kind of map out a bit of a family tree, in terms of the names, the first names and surnames of your sort of close family members.

B Well, there's Mummy and Daddy. That was Dick Woodhouse and Jenny Woodhouse. She was a Holt before she married my dad. And she had one sister, Edna. And she became Long when she married Uncle Eddie. My father's family... now then, there was quite a few and yet we didn't know all of them very well, they weren't the tightest of units, were they?

J No, they weren't.

B He had his sister Mabel, who literally lived 2 minutes away from us, she was in the next street, she never moved either. And he had his sister Blanche, he had a brother Jim, who was the market inspector at the old market in Morecambe, he had a brother Harry. I'm not quite sure what Harry did because Harry sort of disappeared off the map somewhat so where he went, what he do I don't know. And then there was Annie wasn't there?

J Yes.

B And Annie went to live in Lancaster didn't she?

J And then there was Bell, Auntie Bell.

B I didn't really know Bell.

J And she lived down West End and we went there to Auntie Bell's at the end of the war, she had a party.

B Well I wouldn't remember that would I?

J You wouldn't.

B I was only born half an hour before the VJ (both laugh).

Wow.

B I was born at half past 11 on the 14th.

J So erm, but er yes, she had a party then but I don't remember seeing her after that really.

B Well I don't remember Bell at all, they were quite a big family but we were really, we really only saw my Auntie Mabel on Clark Street and strangely enough brother Jim lived on Clark Street.

This is all in Morecambe was it?

B Yeah because my father's parents had lived in a house on Clark Street at the turn of the century and everybody's tended to stay. And they had to, you see, because when you're fishing you have to be near your boats, haven't you?

So talking of occupations then, obviously your father Dick was a well-known fisherman in Morecambe. What did some of the other family members do, like your grandparents and... ?

B Same thing. On my dad's side my dad's father was a fisherman and he also, like quite a few Morecambe Bay fishermen, I don't know whether you know about them but they sailed yachts on Windermere for the wealthy people because our grandfather sailed for Sir William Forwood, didn't he?

J Yes.

B And he was chairman of Cunard Shipping.

Right, and what was his name, sorry?

B He was Dick Woodhouse, Richard Woodhouse as well. Because they were good yachtsmen, they went to work for the Royal Windermere Yacht Club.

J And Grandma Woodhouse, she was a Bell and that's another fishing family you see. Her brother Uncle Walter, he did fish, but he also did a lot... he was very skillful at boat-building and things, repairs. And so they were all fishing too.

And Grandma Woodhouse, sorry, you may have said this, what was her first name?

J Annie.

B Annie?

J Yes.

B Who was Isabel, the one I never met?

J That was Grandma Holt.

B You see, my mother's parents died before I was born so I never knew them. I've only seen pictures and things like that.

J Yes, because the other... there weren't quite so many on the other side. My mother

just had the one sister and her parents died quite young, so...

B We didn't have much of a family there at all, did we?

J No and... yes, so and then they had sort of step family in Warrington and Widnes area. But apart from that, no.

B We didn't really have much to do with Mummy's side.

J Oh, grandma's... I mean, there was Uncle Dick down the road.

B Oh, yes.

J Grandma Holt's brother.

So then the fishing, was that like a real sort of family affair then? Was your Mum involved with it just as much?

B Oh, yeah. All the family was involved. And it was the same for all the shrimpers. I don't know, I can't speak for the people who went cockling and musselling, or salmon fishing obviously. But shrimping was a family concern, wasn't it?

J Yeah.

B The men went out to catch them, they brought them home, the women and the children picked them. And then after the Morecambe Trawlers – they got like a union together, didn't they?

J Fishermen's Cooperative.

B They were being fleeced by people from other... they'd say, "This is rotten, what

you've got here." So to cover themselves, they all got together and they formed Morecambe Trawlers. And they had a potting shed. So that when the picked shrimps went from the house to the trawlers, that's where predominantly fishing... fishermen's wives or female relatives did the potting, in the potting shed at Morecambe Trawlers. And then they got everything... you know, packed them all up and sent them off to places like Young's, who unfortunately are closing, aren't they, I think.

J Oh, are they?

B I think Young's fishing on the East Coast, I think they're going under. But it was big business.

What memories do you have then of your mother and father, just general daily life as you were growing up? What kind of people were they?

B Well, we were lucky, weren't we?

J Hmm.

B They were very nice people.

J Yes.

B Because with all due respect, fishermen could be quite difficult people (laughs).

I can imagine.

J It was interesting, and of course one of the nice things in a way about having a father who was a fisherman, I mean, he could always go to Parents' Afternoons at the grammar school. He was one of few people who could. They used to have it on Wednesday afternoons, because that was half-day closing, which freed up a number of

other people. But Dad could nearly always turn up, so he was one of the few, so that was quite nice. And they were busy people I think, as well, they did a lot.

B Oh, yeah.

J Yeah.

B Well, when you think, before I was born, when Jean was a little girl, they rented a house just down the road from where I am now, actually, on Oxford Street. And they took, Mummy took in paying guests in summer. But the thing was, in those days, they bought their food when they were out and brought it back for the woman of the house to cook. So if you'd more than one or two people, you're cooking anything (laughs) you know. Be it ham or fish or steak, or whatever they brought with them. But Mummy did do that for a while, didn't she? To supplement. Because obviously sometimes the fishing was so poor. It could be the weather, it could be the fact that the shrimps weren't running. I mean, one year, I think it was about 11 months, my Dad from one good catch to another one, because they just didn't do the autumn run. They just didn't appear.

So what kind of... can you remember sort of what year it was or how old you were at the time that that happened?

B Well, I was quite small. I would think I was probably somewhere around 10 or 11 when that happened.

J I have a feeling that I was at university. Because I don't actually remember being at home.

B It's just that I remember him saying, he came in and he said the first decent catch he'd had in however many months was on my birthday and that was the 14th of August. So the autumn run came early. But obviously, you know, the women had to do other things to help, if they could, to help supplement. Because if there was no shrimps, there was

no money. There was no signing on the dole or anything.

So other things were like when your mum was doing bed and breakfast. What other things would they do?

B I think that was predominantly what they did. Unless they could get a little job somewhere. I don't remember. I think Mrs Swain might've taken people in as well.

J I think she did. I think Mrs [inaud] Willacy she worked at the fish shop, didn't she?

B Yes, she did.

Did you say Willacy?

J Yes.

That's a famous fishing...

B Well, they were all round us, you see.

J Yes.

B There was Gardner's, Willacy's, Swains and Bells... you know. All in the same area. Because we were all still fixtures in the industry then. And you just had to be where your boat was or Morecambe Trawlers, you know. But they did all sorts of bits of things. But it was quite common to take people in, wasn't it?

J Well, Morecambe was a very busy seaside resort, you see, you have to remember. And it attracted a lot of people from South Lancashire and Yorkshire. You got a lot of people in. And you got people in from Scotland as well, Glasgow. So in general if you could do something to do with the... they didn't call it tourism, then, did they? The

visitors. Then that was quite a good thing to be able to do.

B Yes, 'cause it was heaving, wasn't it? Absolutely heaving.

So just rewinding a little then, and if you wouldn't mind, if we could just ask you sort of independently, 'cause obviously there's a bit of an age gap between you... what's kind of some of your earlier memories of growing up and your childhood? Can I start with you, Jean?

J Mm. Er, all my early memories are here, you see. And it's erm... and part of that is during the war as well. So it was things like having an evacuee. Going off down the fields, and from the staircase window my mum could see where we were going. So I used to go out with the girl from the bottom of Town End, from the farm [?], Mary, and we'd take off down the field towards the railway. But we didn't realise that from the staircase window at number 1, people could see what we were up to.

I remember a field of linseed. They planted linseed, the most beautiful blue, oh, it was lovely. And we went into it just to walk in it, and it was really, really muddy. And Mary lost a shoe, which was pretty difficult.

One of your friends, Mary?

J Mm. So anyway, it's things like that. It's going to church. And it always seemed to be quite dark at night, of course, because it was wartime, so everything... it was dark in the country anyway, but everything was quite dark. So I always... when I think about going to church, I always think about the church being quite dark inside.

And going to school was lovely, I enjoyed school. Slides in the yard in the winter, down by the wall. You could get away with a slide going down the side. And then brownies and guides and... yeah. And an evacuee, Marion, came from Gorsded (ph) in London.

Cats. My mother had cats. And yeah, walking down to the farm for the milk. And yeah, that sort of thing.

And at the time, my parents had moved back here because my mother's parents... well, grandma wasn't well, so they'd moved back. So my dad was going out on a bike. Or at one point I think he had a motorbike. I don't really remember that.

B He did have a motorbike.

J Down between Morecambe and Heysham.

Then after the war, we were still there. Oh, Dad was in the fire brigade. And the football club. Going round with... to watch. I wasn't very keen on that, it was always very cold on the touchline (laughs). But that was OK, we went to the village football ground. And lots of walks, really. And oh, of course, the other thing we did quite often, we did go to the Winter Gardens and things like that.

Lovely, thank you. And what about you, Barbara? You've had a bit of time to think about it.

B Well, I was just thinking, to be brutally honest, everything Jean's said, a lot of it applies to me. Because I still came to school here, even though we lived in Morecambe. I got the bus up to Bolton-le-Sands. My auntie used to see I got sort of there and back OK, you know. And one thing I do remember about coming from Morecambe to Bolton-le-Sands Primary School... when we came out of school and Auntie came to put me on the bus a bit further down the road here, there was a field near the bus stop. And there was a... I don't know exactly what it was, it wasn't exactly a horse, it was a sort of cross. Do you remember him? He was called Rispa (ph).

J Yes.

B And he knew when school was coming out. And he'd amble along the field, and the head would come over the gate. And he was waiting for either an apple, a carrot or whatever somebody had saved him, brought him. Every day, he was there. He was a lovely old thing. As I say, he was no racehorse, but he was such a friendly creature.

But apart from school and, like with Jean, the Guides, because I was only about five when we moved, most of my time, I remember, literally like in any town really, playing in the street with all the kids. Playing marbles on the old grates. People... we'd all get together and go to the beach, because you were so close to the beach, of course. We could literally put our swimsuits on, grab a towel and walk down to the beach. And nobody bothered then. Everybody just went together. Parents...

No, it's slightly different for me, as I say, because as June pointed out, Morecambe was a very busy area for visitors, and in those days there was still quite a few fishermen. So you spent a lot of time, particularly in the good weather, going with your little mates, playing on the beach. We used to go and... there was a slipway, Green Street, it's where the lifeboat station is now. There was a slipway where all the old fishermen got together and met. And quite often, you'd go and sit in the shelter and listen to them talk. You know. They'd all get together. Oh! What was that comedian called? There was an old comedian came to live in Morecambe and he was always on the top with the fishermen.

J Albert Modley.

B That was it, Albert Modley. He used to come, walk across from his house and sit with the old fishermen talking.

So really my life basically revolved around playing with the kids in the street, particularly the ones that backed onto our yard. I was very friendly... they were called Gardner's. That was an old fishing name as well. And I spent a lot of time with Barton and Carol, the son and daughter there. Because Mrs Gardner's cellar was in a better nick than

ours, and it had all sorts in it, it was really good, we could use it as a playroom like Americans do now, you know, it was really good.

But as I said, apart from going on the beach... there was a lot... there was a land at the back of the town hall, where the car parks are now. And it was all trees and grass. So... groups of us used to go and it was cowboys and Indians and all sorts of things. My mother made me a Sioux headdress out of seagull feathers. You know the old chief's headdress? I played with that for a long time. It was predominantly playing around the area. That was it. It was a nice safe area to play because there weren't many cars or anything there. And of course the beach, everybody went on the beach.

But one of the things I remember most about my parents, my dad used to let me get up with him in the early hours of the morning when I was little to listen to the heavyweight boxing being broadcast from America. Because the fights would always be say 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. And he'd put the radio on so that we could listen to any British heavyweight that was fighting over in the states (laughs). And he took us to football a lot of course. So consequently, I turned into a football fan, following boxing. I went all the way to London just to see Joe Frazier training. I can't believe I did it but I did. But it was things like that that stuck with me. And it was all because my Dad sort of involved us in things, you know. It was really pleasant.

And you said that you can remember all the fishermen getting together. Where would they get together and... you said you remember them chattering, what did they used to talk about?

Oh, they'd just talk about how their day had gone. Or if they were retired, they'd come, basically having a nosy, wasn't it, really? To see what the others had done. It would be, "Hey, Willacy, how's your day been?" Or, "Alright Woodhouse?" They were all just chattering together. Because there was the slipway there. And there was also a long wooden landing that they could use for the little punts and things to bring their stuff on. But there was a big shelter, like a bus shelter, wasn't there?

J A promenade shelter.

B A promenade shelter, it wasn't a bus shelter. It had four sides.

J In fact, is it still there down the West End?

B Yeah, but not like the one that was at Green Street. It had 4 sides. It had a side that looked out over the Bay, one that looked onto the road, and two that, you know, just looked down the proms. So if it was a bad day, they'd gather in the shelter and talk.

It was just general life with them, but predominantly about what had gone on, who'd done what, and if somebody had lost a boat or if they'd had a good catch, or...

J It was, they called it going on the top, didn't they? And it must have been a sort of traditional gathering place, I suppose. Because it's where you took your... You took your stuff down to get your punt to go on the boat and then came in. So it was very much a meeting point.

So sorry, what did going on the top, what did it actually mean then?

B That was literally going to Green Street Slipway.

J Where the slipway was, that was the top, and you went down from the top down the slipway. And so that was the sort of colloquial thing. They'd say, "Oh, I'll just take a walk down to the top."

B Yeah, because the slipway was where they... if the tide was out, that was where they would walk up.

Because we, somewhere, I don't know whether I've got it or you've got it, hopefully

somewhere, had a super photograph of Basil Ferranti. He was an MP for Morecambe. And we had a picture of him walking up the slipway. And this was a chap who was a millionaire at least, wasn't he? And he was walking up Green Street Slipway with an oilskin and a bag of shrimps over his shoulder.

J Good PR for the Conservative Party.

B Oh yes, he was, he was. He enjoyed going out shrimping. Very, very nice man, that.

So with there being a seven, seven and a half year age gap between you, did you generally get on well as sisters?

B We slept together, didn't we, for years?

J Yeah, yeah.

B In the same room I'm in now, we slept in a double bed in that room.

J But it's quite interesting because I went to university, and then I didn't really live back in Morecambe, which meant that when I came back, I was doing all the sort of holiday things really. You know. And the other things, you just slipped back into the routine, you know. What time's the tide? What time are you going out? What time are people coming back? Sort of thing.

B With Jean being away... but mine was all Morecambe based. I mean, I got a little bit older. And if the weather wasn't too bad in summer when we were off school, my dad would say, "Do you want to go in the morning?" And he'd let me go trawling with him. It could be anything from 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning to 4 or 5, depending on the tide. But he would let me go on the boat with him. So I thoroughly enjoyed that, you know, it was super, just going out on the Bay, just you and your Dad. And the boat, and watching the sunrise, and the seals and porpoises came up, and it was absolutely

fantastic. I loved that.

I'll ask you more about that in a bit. So going back to the sort of family dynamics, did you all have kind of different roles and responsibilities or...

J We didn't really, did we? No, not me and you. I mean, I think I must've been a very selfish cat actually, when I think about it (laughs). I remember my dad once saying, "No wonder the Japanese gave up" (ph) [30:34]. No, I don't think we did. I think we were quite spoilt, really. My mother was very efficient and I think she enjoyed looking after us all.

B When you think there was so little money, but we didn't know there was so little money, because we didn't feel it, you know? There was a coal fire in the bedroom if it was really bad in winter, and we always had good food, didn't we?

J Yes.

B And Mummy made sure, whatever clothes we needed, even if it was special clothes, we got them. I mean, I remember she actually had my school uniforms, and probably yours, summer uniforms, she had them made for us, didn't she?

J Mm, yes.

B I don't know how she did it, but she did. And she had my confirmation dress made for me.

So where do you think the extra money came from then?

B She must've been a very good housekeeper, I think.

Very resourceful.

J I think they managed very well.

B Because they, I mean, being fishermen, if you had your own shop, that made a big difference. But of course when you were just shrimping for somebody else and sending it through the trawlers, you relied on what they'd got, didn't you?

You didn't notice. I mean, if somebody had told me how poor we were, I wouldn't have noticed, because...

J I think the other thing is, I think it is all relative, because I think as a market commodity, shrimps have always been quite highly prized, really, compared with a lot of things.

B Oh, they are, they're a luxury, aren't they?

J Yeah. And so I think that probably means that... but I think that they were very good at managing, and evening things out over the year, so you didn't...

And the other thing, of course, that happened, they... a lot of fishermen, and my Dad was one, they went onto, there was a fishermen's company, the pleasure boats.

B Oh, the playboats, yeah, I'd forgotten about that.

J And so during the high season, summer season, they would go and sail, you know, around the bay, for day-trippers.

B That was the flagstaff (ph) landing, wasn't it?

J Well, it was the flagstaff landing and the...

B And the Central Pier landing.

J And the landing at the end of Queen Street.

B Yeah, because he sailed the Mauritania from there, didn't he?

J Yeah.

B That was a red Morecambe Bay nobby. My Dad sailed on the Mauritania for pleasure on that. And then the flagstaff landing was where, roughly where the Eric Morecambe statue is now. There was a huge flagpole. Well, they call it... it was a mast, wasn't it?

J Yeah.

B Rumour had it it came off one of the ships that wrecked near Heysham, didn't it? But they put it up and they had a little kiosk at the top. And the fishermen, different fishermen would sail different boats.

J And of course, even retired fishermen would go on the company in the summer, because, you know, you'd get... 'cause once Granddad Woodhouse had stopped fishing, he still sailed for the company.

B Yeah.

So he still worked on the pleasure boats then as a kind of additional...

B Yeah. Once he decided to stop fishing...

J He did stop fishing! (laughs)

B He came in one night... My father as a young boy had started fishing with his father like they all did. As soon as you got old enough, you went with your parents. And he

came home to Clark Street, sat down, and he said, "Well, that's me finished, our Dick." And he said, "Is that it for today?" And he said, "No, that's me finished, our Dick. I'm not going anymore." And he never went again. And yet my father, you couldn't get my father off the bay.

J No.

B Until he was really poorly and he couldn't go on the Bay, you couldn't get him off. But I think that's why I got... I got so enthusiastic as a child about going. Because he loved it so much, he was so into it, and everything that was going on, you wanted to know.

J Hmm.

So what was it, do you think, that made your grandfather decide that was it?

B He was a totally different character, wasn't he? Granddad Woodhouse. He just decided he'd had enough, end of story.

J Yeah, I think he did.

B Because he did the same thing with Sir William Forwood, didn't he?

J Hmm, just stopped, yeah.

B He sailed with Sir William Forwood for quite a few years. So it... it was over a trivial amount of money. Granddad thought Sir William Forwood had sort of stiffed him over a few quid, I think (laughs). And he said, "That's the last time you'll have the pleasure of putting money in that hand." And he went back to Morecambe, and Lady Forwood came, didn't she?

J Mm.

B With Faith, Hope and Charity, the girls. "We've come to see skipper to come back, to get him back." And my grandma said, "You're wasting your time, he won't come."

And he wouldn't go back. Stubborn as a mule. Mind you, there again, they say it's a Woodhouse trait, perhaps, stubborn as a mule.

J Yes.

B I think we've both inherited it. But once he'd decided he'd stopped... you see, my father was a different kettle of fish. He... shrimping, lifeboat, inshore swims, cross-bay swims, pleasure boats, fishing parties. Anything to go on the bay.

He lived for it.

B He helped... he took people out when they were building the tanker pier during the war at Heysham, didn't he? He was the boatman for taking people out to build the tanker pier for the oil refinery. It was anything to do with the bay. You couldn't get him off it.

And I think that rubbed off on me to quite a great extent, really, 'cause I'd absolutely loved going on the bay. And I think that was possibly another... I'd been on the water all the time and started swimming, I wanted to swim. 'Cause fishermen in general didn't swim.

And was the same... did your mum share the same passions then? Because if he was so... I don't really want to use the word 'obsessive'... if he was so enthusiastic about it, did that impact on family life or...

B No, no. But I only remember the odd set-too, when he went to buy a new engine and didn't tell her.

J Hmm.

B That didn't go down so well. But she went to the football, didn't she?

J Yeah, yeah.

B You know. They went to the... well, we all went to the pictures and, like Jean said, the Winter Gardens. We had the same seats on Row F from the aisle in. We had the same seats for every show we went to. So they did theatre, pictures, football. I mean, we went all over with football, didn't we?

J Mm.

B With the North Lancashire league. And then they started taking me, God help me, to Blackpool. Dear God, I'm suffering (ph) now. So we went as a family unit to things like that. And Morecambe Football Club.

J We didn't often all go out in the boat, did we?

B No, Mummy wasn't one for going on the boat.

J No.

B She wasn't. I loved it, but my mum wasn't interested, I don't think. But there again, most of the wives weren't.

And how did you feel about it then, Jean? 'Cause you didn't seem to... Is it 'cause you were away for a bit that you didn't maybe gain the same passion as Barbara?

J Yeah, I think that probably is true. I think... I don't know, I was thinking about it then. I think it's the difference in ages. I think that by the time we moved to Morecambe, I hadn't really lived near the fishing, I think that's probably it. So I think my focus was rather away from it really.

B Well, it would be. You'd a completely different lifestyle with going to uni, hadn't you? You see, I didn't like school at all. I learnt what I had to learn and what I needed to get, so I could get out. But Jean was much more academically minded, so she took a different route really, didn't you?

J Hmm. But, you know, when I had people to stay during the summer break and things like that, I mean, they always went out fishing. Yeah.

B Oh, yeah. Wasn't it one of your friends when she was here who entered Miss Great Britain, to see whether it was fixed?

J No.

B Somebody... somebody I know had a friend enter Miss Great Britain to see if it was fixed, and I can't remember who it was now. Trivial thing to do, but they just wanted to know.

(laughs) And did they get the answer that they wanted?

B She did very well, yes. And of course, I spent a lot of time in the swimming stadium. Because I was interested in swimming, my summers from being quite small were spent in the big swimming stadium, because you got a blue seagull certificate if you did a full length... it was an Olympic-sized pool, and you got a blue seagull. And I did my blue seagull on one of the coldest days of the summer, and my dad didn't believe I'd got it. So he went to the stadium to check. He said, "Did somebody do a blue seagull?" They said, "Aye, a little thing. She wouldn't stop." My dad said, "No, there was money at the end of it." I think there was 10 shillings. I got... I think it was 2 and sixpence for swimming across the half-moon... there was a half-moon at each end. I got 5 shillings for swimming the breadth, and then I got 10 shillings for swimming the full Olympic length. So I spent a lot of time in there, year after year, it was a fantastic place. Just

take something to eat or a bit of money for the cafe, and there were sun terraces and everything, it was lovely.

As children then, did you spend a lot of time on the beach and, you know, going to different areas of the bay to explore?

J No.

B Predominantly Bolton-le-Sands and Morecambe, wasn't it?

J In terms of...

B Beaches.

J Beaches. No, not really, because...

B We went round the bay on holiday, didn't we? By train.

J Well, we went down the valley by train. But yeah, I think Bolton-le-Sands, Hest Bank and Morecambe, and down to Heysham. But that was your sort of stamping ground, really. And also I think that was... it was quite difficult, really, to go anywhere else. It was quite easy to go up to the Lake District for the day 'cause the bus services were good. But if you wanted to go... sort of focus more on the bay, that was more problematic. Unless you rode a bike, but I wasn't very keen on bikes.

B We used to have a regular trip to Blackpool, didn't we? We always had a family outing to Blackpool once a year.

J Yes.

B With Auntie Edna.

J Hmm.

B Auntie Edna and Uncle Eddie, they'd hire their friends' car, wouldn't they? And we all went to Blackpool for the day. So that was to get out of the area. That was the set routine. You had the same thing every time we went, didn't we? We ate at... was it Hills' (ph) stall, wasn't it? Just behind the tower.

J Hmm.

B And you went in the tower and the aquarium, and the Pleasure Beach, and the illuminations, and you crammed everything into a day (laughs). It was good.

J Yeah, I... I'm trying to think. I don't ever remember really going to the shore at Silverdale. I remember going to the Lily Woods and things but...

B Well, that was one of the Easter trips to the Lily Woods, wasn't it?

J At Whitsuntide.

B Oh, was it Whitsuntide? Arnside Tower.

J Arnside Tower.

B Because a farmer up there had a lily.. it was like a little birch wood, wasn't it? I think. Was it birch?

J No, it was... it was the... triple stand. You know. It was oak canopy, hazel undergrowth, and then you had the spring flora at the bottom.

B But it was full of lily of the valley. And you could go to the farm and for a nominal few

pence or whatever, we picnicked in his field up near the Arnside Tower, and then you went in the Lily Wood.

J And then you could go in the lily woods and pick some flowers.

B You could pick as many as you wanted, but you couldn't touch the bulbs. But that was nice. And that was like the Blackpool day out, wasn't it? It was a standard thing every year that you did.

J I think we heard quite a lot about different parts of the bay, because people talked about things at Arnside and Grange. And we went to Grange on Sunday School trips, of course, on the train.

B Mm.

J And that was when they still had the hooter for the tide coming in.

B Yes, coming in as fast as a horse could gallop, they reckoned, didn't they? So they had a warning sign to let you know to get off the sandbanks.

What was that? Could you describe that a bit more to me? What did they used to do?

J When they... before the coastline changed at Grange, where there's now a lot of grass, the channel was running much nearer to the promenade. And they had a tidal bore came. The tide came in on a bore, a small bore, and a hooter used to sound.

Every day then? Every time?

B Yes. To let people know to get out of the way, because the tide was coming.

J It was coming, mm. I don't know...

B I think there's a similar thing up at Arnside, isn't there? I think there's a similar thing at Arnside still. 'Cause when I was in the museum, one of our casual workers was a coastguard, and he spent a lot of time up there. But I think they have a warning for the bore. But at Grange, because it... well, it was more like Morecambe is now, it came right up to the prom, didn't it? And they did... the swimming pool was on the prom as well, wasn't it?

J Still is.

B Is it still there, the outdoor swimming pool?

J I don't know what they're doing with it, but it's still there.

B But they had a hooter like a foghorn thing, wasn't it, to let you know the tide was coming. And across the road from our house on the roof of the fire station, and I could sleep through it, we had an air raid siren... air siren, didn't we? You know how they used to during the war, they used to have a siren to let people know the bombs were coming, and then they had an all clear sound? We had one of those on top of the fire station, and it was the way they called the firemen in. So that could go off any time of day or night.

J It was quite loud, wasn't it?

B And you could sleep through it. You got so used to it, it was like sleeping next to a railway, you could sleep through this thing going off (laughs).

J So I think you knew a bit about different parts of the bay, didn't you, but I think... I think at that point I think you do tend to forget how very really quite parochial it was in...

B Like the country people. Basically, you know, like they said, not that long ago, when you think about it, people didn't leave their villages really. You know.

J Mm.

B You might go into the main town. You might live in a small village up the Lune valley and occasionally go into Lancaster, but people didn't really move about much. And of course, with us living in the middle of Morecambe...

J We didn't need to move about much.

B Especially as children. Because everything came to Morecambe.

J Wow.

B There was carnivals and there was theatres and there was cinemas and there was dance halls and... you know, well the Miss GB, the swimming... When the illuminations were on, you got all the big stars coming to do the lights, didn't you?

What was that like then, being a teenager in Morecambe?

Track 2

B One of the first coffee bars was very near where I lived. I'd be about 12, 13 when that opened. And everybody met in there, it had a juke box and everything. It was one of the first coffee bars around. They were an Italian family who'd come down from... I think they lived in Glasgow.

J Glasgow, I think, yes.

B And they came and opened a coffee shop in Morecambe. So everybody congregated

there. And then of course one or two more opened. Erm, some a little more upmarket, you know, some very basic, but there was quite a few coffee bars around. And there's dance halls. 'Cause as a little... as a smaller girl, sort of 9, 10, we used... there was a children's night at the tower... the Gaumont, where the bingo is now, there was a beautiful building. It was gonna be a tower, but the First World War came and they had to pull what bit of tower they'd put up down. It had a circular ballroom and cinema and garden, it was fantastic. So they had a children's night there. Erm... there was the central pier ballroom, with a sort of resident band and a resident organist, Harold Graham, wasn't there? He was really nice.

And there was the Winter Gardens ballroom and theatre. There was the Floral Hall, which was the one where you got the big names coming. I mean, not big names by today's standards, people would hardly have heard of them. But you got people like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Screaming Lord Sutch, Johnny Kidd, The Springfield's, Joe Brown, Gerry and the Pacemakers type of people, you know, they all came. And in those days they mixed with people, of course, which, bearing in mind, I saw a programme, the Antiques Roadshow the other day, if I hadn't taken a dislike to John Lennon and Paul McCartney... £3000 for the four signatures.

Ooh!

B And I took a dislike. And I took a dislike to Mick Jagger, so I didn't bother with him either.

So why was that then? Just not your taste in music?

B No, I just didn't like John Lennon, didn't like Mick Jagger (laughs), end of story.

Their personalities?

B Yeah, just didn't like 'em. Brian Jones was nice, and of course he died, and I was

never a Stones fan anyway. But all the big stars came. They came to the Winter Gardens, didn't they? I mean, they had massive shows at the Winter Gardens. And during the war, massive big stars, Americans and all sorts. The chap who had the Winter Gardens worked on the basis if they worked at the Winter Gardens they'd work in London. Because they wouldn't take any nonsense, the crowds here. If they didn't like you, they let you know they didn't like you. But there was all sorts for teenagers. I mean, as I say, during the day, the beach, the stadium, coffee bars, there was all sorts. And I think they had seven cinemas, didn't they, at one time? Seven would be. Palladium, Odeon, Gaumont... Arcadian, Empire, Plaza, Palace.

J Whitehall.

B Yeah, Whitehall. I think made seven. At Whitehall, your neck used to hurt, didn't it? Because you'd to look up at the screen if you got too near the front, it was so high up.

So some of these famous stars then, have you got any clear memories of having conversations with them or when you went on nights out? Have you got any vivid memories?

B I don't know that I have really. I remember talking to people in general conversation. PJ Proby came a few times. I personally liked him. I mean, he was really an Elvis impersonator in a lot of ways. Alcoholic. But I liked him, he could carry on a good conversation, he was a pleasant bloke to be with. Johnny Kidd, unfortunately he was killed a few weeks after I met him, he was nice. I don't know. You just sat... in those days, they'd talk to you... you know, they'd go in the bar and have a drink and... there was none of this "I need seven security guards to get to the car" or anything like that.

And what did you used to wear?

B Erm... oh, gosh. Just trying to think what I... one of the first dresses I remember vividly was a twist dress. You know one of those that was shaped in down to here, and then

flared out? I remember that, Chubby Checker and the Twist. Otherwise, it was just skirts. My mother, God love her, sugar starch, got me lovely big underskirts. And it was basically blouses and skirts. And you got these masses of frills so that your skirt came out. I had one in tangerine, and a white cardigan for Blackpool. A tangerine sercloth skirt and a white cardigan with an orange brooch, that was my Blackpool outfit. I'd a big felt skirt, turquoise blue felt skirt. But it was all these layers of stuff underneath. 'cause when you were driving... everybody had great big skirts, you know. And then we went into... as we got slightly older, you went into more the slinky black cocktail dress to go to the Floral Hall, I think I'd four or five different ones. And 'cause you tended to dress up a bit, you know.

Mm.

You didn't go in jeans. You tended to dress up.

And Barbara, I mean, you're a tall, slender lady and you've got a great head of hair. I bet you were quite striking and attracted quite a bit of attention, did you?

B Well, I didn't do so bad (laughs). No, I didn't do so bad. It was totally unflattering, but because I was so striking, I remember, oh, it was a few years later, Bay City Rollers were at the... oh, what was it called? Canary Bowl (ph). And lead singer was doing one of his hits and directing it at me (laughs). And then when he'd finished, "Can I say something?" And I said, "What?" He said, "Your hair looks like an explosion in a mattress factory" (laughs). 'Cause it... all black and back-combed up and down here and... (laughs). But er... oh, yeah, we did alright, we had a good time.

And so moving on to your working life then, Barbara, you said that you stayed in Morecambe, and Jean you said that you went off to university. So what did you do in terms of jobs and... ?

J Took chemistry. That's it (laughs).

And you became a teacher?

J Yes.

A chemistry teacher?

J Yes.

And did you do that locally or away or... ?

J No. I started working in Hampton in Middlesex, and then I got married, and then wherever my husband was I got a job. It was quite useful being a chemist, because often there was a spot for a chemist at local schools and things. So yeah, just pootled along teaching chemistry.

And you said that you got married..

J Yes.

And so when did you return to Bolton-le-Sands where you live now?

J That's a good question, isn't it? (Pause) My husband retired from the army and he had a job...

B In Manchester.

J In Manchester. And we lived on Salford Quays, they were just building Salford Quays. And we were looking for a house within easy reach of Manchester, and my mother was still alive, Barbara was still in Morecambe, the boys had all been at Lancaster Royal Grammar School as boarders. So we had quite a lot of sort of connection with this area.

So we looked around here and... I think it must've been about 1990...

B When Mummy's old house came up, didn't it?

J About 1994 or something... 5. 4, 5? Something like that, anyway.

B Had you moved when Auntie died?

J Yes. But I was weekly commuting.

B Yeah.

J You know. Coming here and going back to Manchester. So I didn't move here until I retired, which was about... I think I celebrated the millennium...

B We had the millennium here.

J Yes. No, I think that's when I retired. I think I thought, "That's it, it's a nice time to go." So quite a long time.

When you said the boys then, is that... did you have children?

J Yeah, I still do (laughs).

B Yeah, she's... she had 3 boys, I had 2. Unfortunately my younger one died 4 years ago. But there was 5 boys... you see, my dad... they only had me and you, didn't they?

J Yeah.

B And then Jean had 3 boys and I had 2 boys.

J So that pleased my dad a lot.

B They all went fishing with my dad.

J Yeah.

Ah.

J So erm...

And Barbara, what about you in terms of your first job and...

B The District Bank in Lancaster on Church Street, the big bank on... it's NatWest now. I hated school, but I knew what I had to get in GCEs because then you took an exam for the bank. So you got the GCEs you needed to qualify for the bank, and then you took a bank exam. I was there for a few years, and then I went to work for the... the marketing board opened literally about 5 minutes walk from where I live, and I was there for quite a few years. When that moved, I went to work at a petrol station, the County Garage in Morecambe. I absolutely loved it. I set off in the office, and they were having such a good time on the forecourt, I went to work on the pumps for 10 years and I really enjoyed that. That was great. And then there was just a... ran a camera shop for a few years for somebody. And then in my early, mid 40s, the chance of this part time one at the museum came up, and I think I stayed there till I was about 65. I worked there about 23, 24 years, didn't I?

That's Lancaster Maritime Museum.

B Yeah, Lancaster Maritime Museum. So that was the biggest chunk of my working life. I mean, there wasn't a museum there then, but it would've been ideal for me to do it all the time really, 'cause I loved it, it was great. 'Cause I like history, for a start, and it was local history as well, so it was really good.

**So what do you remember then about your sons going out with your dad fishing?
Tell me about that.**

B They all went, didn't they? All 5 of them.

J We just waved them off very cheerfully.

B You just said "Bye," and they trundled off, you know, in a sort of range of sizes.

(laughs)

B And went fishing with my dad. I remember Nigel, my younger one, who died, my dad said, "I don't know, I think he's gonna be worst of the lot. Can't get rid of him. Every time I turn round, he's there.

J They really did.

B Follow my dad everywhere.

J Yeah.

B But they all loved going fishing.

Were they all doing it as a sort of hobby? Did any of them think that they might want to pursue it or... ?

B No.

J No.

B Except Paul.

J Paul might've.

B Paul, not in a fishing way, but he worked in a factory for 18, 19 years. He left school, and about 18 or 19 years later when it closed, he went to work up at Heysham Port and he went as a sort of skipper, not a pilot but working the pilot boat for the pilots. So he spent quite a bit of time... and then he joined the RNLI, he was in the RNLI for a few years. So he was the only one that really followed my dad like that, 'cause my dad was lifeboat all his life.

But I guess erm...

J I think they've all got a feeling for...

B Oh, they all like... yeah.

J Well, the bay particularly, yes.

The industry must have changed so much though over that period of time. Did they realise that they couldn't make a living out of it or... ?

B You couldn't make a living. My dad said, when they said, "Young men aren't...", he said, "Can you blame them? Look at the work you've to put in for sometimes nothing, sometimes nothing." He said, "And you can go..." Well, it's not quite the same now but he said they could go to factories and, you know, you could work on railways, you could work in factories, you could drive buses, you... when the power station came and the harbour... guaranteed money, guaranteed hours. Well, out on the bay, with the response- number one, it can get pretty unpleasant out there on a bad day and number 2, it's bloody hard work, isn't it? You've got the upkeep of your boat, you've got all the manual work, and the hours... I mean, you're up early hours, God forbid, you rely on the

tide, you're out for the full tide. And then you had to come back and you'd to pick 'em. You know, I mean, it was a hard slog in that way.

And was it a job do you think that only a man could do realistically, or... ?

B I... it's an awful thing to say because I think women can do nearly anything, but physically...

J It's a very demanding job physically.

B It's a very demanding job because you've to pull the nets. OK, you had a mechanical capstan but even so, I mean, bloody hard work pulling them big nets in, especially when they were full. It is quite physically demanding. I mean, the actual sailing the boat and all that, no, but...

J I think one of the problems was the number of full-time fishermen had dropped to a point where it was no longer economically viable. You can't really, unless you're in an absolutely niche market, be a one-man-band in a job like that I don't think. Because you have to have... what you do with your catch, you have to have some sort of structure.

B You have to have, like Mark and Ray, they've got their own shops.

Mark Willacy and Ray Edmonson.

B Yeah, and if you've got your own shop, you're fine. Your family'll pick your shrimps. And then you buy... I mean, you can sell the fish you catch in the bay, but you can buy in from other markets to fill your shelves up, you know, stock your shop up. So it is in that... that works. But there was only... I think there was only two, wasn't there, that did that... There was John Thomas Woodhouse, wasn't there?

J Hmm.

B He had a big fish shop, didn't he?

J Mm.

B And Raby's had one on Queen Street.

J Yes.

B But it wasn't common for people to have their own outlets.

J No.

And if you'd've had a brother, do you think that Dick would've encouraged them to go into the fishing trade or not perhaps?

J I think he'd've left them to make their mind up.

B He wouldn't've discouraged.

J But I think...

B But he'd've understood.

J I think at that time, a brother in between the two of us, I think almost certainly would've followed on.

B I think I would if I was a boy.

J Yes.

B I think I'd've gone.

J Yes.

B 'Cause I really liked it. But er... I couldn't physically, I know I couldn't physically do it. I'm by no means big enough built to do a job like that.

What did you love so much about it then Barbara?

B Everything. Number one, I got my dad to myself, 'cause I was a bit of a daddy's girl. I got my dad to myself, and you got... well, you just got nature in the raw, I mean, you got everything, it was fantastic. There's the pleasure of being on the water, which I absolutely love. There was the sky, the changing skies, and squally weather was even nice, the wildlife...

J Hmm.

B It was just brilliant. You know...

J I think we were all interested, because he used to bring things back, you know, if he'd been fishing on the north side, he'd bring that particular shells that you only got when you fished on the north side on a rocky bottom. Or just different things that you got in the net.

So when you say north side, can you clarify where do you mean?

J It was round the corner from Barrow.

B It's different areas of the bay. Yeah, the other side of the bay. 'Cause they fished in different... well, they were looking for shrimps in different areas. And then the word would get round among the men, "You had a good catch at Heysham Lake, or

somebody had a good catch somewhere, you know, and they'd follow it round.”

J Or...

B They went as far as Southport, didn't they?

J They went down Blackpool way, yeah.

B When there wasn't many running up the bay, they went down towards Blackpool.

J And then Heysham Lake and Lune deeps, Grange channel, Ulverston channel, north side, but that was prawning.

B Yeah. And of course they, to supplement, when there was no shrimps about, erm, white baiting, they'd go for whitebait. I could never understand why anybody wanted them horrible little fish.

J They're not very nice, are they?

B You don't eat the whole thing. I mean, they look at you on the plate. There's bones and everything, it's horrible.

J And they would change to a fluke net, you know, from a shrimp net, if there wasn't much around, and go out after sort of plaice and things.

And when your dad would bring back sort of shells and different things, can you describe what it was?

J It was just bits back that he found. You get these lovely top shells that are lovely sort of curly things or...

B Mm.

J Just a different, different bits of sea life.

B You got sharks'... like the little sharks' purses.

J Oh, the mermaids' purses, yes, yeah.

B That the baby sharks had come out of. And that that looked like sponge.

J Yes.

B What were they? They were eggs of something, weren't they? You used to get things coming up in the net about that big, and it was just like a great big sponge, but they were eggs from...

J Dog whelk. Dog whelk.

B That's it.

J Yes.

And sorry, what was the mermaids' purses?

B Baby sharks.

J When you go on the shore, you see these black bits.

B There about so long, aren't they? (miming) They're about that wide.

J About 10cm, 12cm long. And they're black bags, effectively.

B They just look like little purses, don't they?

J And things develop inside them, and they wash up on the side.

B Yeah, they're little sharks' purses, they are. Baby sharks develop in them.

J But you know, it's nice.

B Yeah, you got all sorts in the nets, didn't you?

J Yes.

B I mean, once he brought a salmon home, didn't he?

J Mm.

B And said, "Don't tell anybody," because he hadn't a salmon licence. But it had drowned in the net anyway. And I remember him getting a lobster once.

J Yes.

B He got a lobster in the net.

J Hmm.

B But that... you didn't get things like that often, because basically you fished on sandy bottoms for shrimps.

J Mm.

B And of course lobsters live in rocks. But er... and a wide variety of crabs, wasn't there?

J Yes.

B Wide variety. 'Cause one bloke, one fella he took out... you'd get big crabs and little crabs. And there was these little crabs with really big claws called Bolton Billys. My dad called them Bolton Billys. And this bloke was helping my dad clean shrimps, and my dad, "Just be careful, ooh, I'm not touching that." This big thing. "I'm not touching that. Ow! Do that. Ow."

J (laughs) They're very aggressive little things, aren't they?

B Ooh, terrible. My dad swore they were just bad-tempered. He said they'd go... he'd watch 'em go through the shrimps, and you'd sort of swear it's temper. Pinching through the shrimps and not even bothering to eat 'em. They were terrible. Horrible little things. But er... yeah, this bloke, "I won't touch that."

J [inaud] used to be quicker.

B Yeah, 'cause by gum, they wouldn't let go. You'd to kill 'em to get 'em off you. Terrible little beasts. And he wouldn't let me do a lot of cleaning in case...

J The stang fish.

B The weever stang fish, the weever fish were in. 'Cause they... I mean, they couldn't kill you perhaps, but they didn't half hurt.

So describe a weever fish then.

B Well, they're about... what do they grow to, about that long? (mimes) They're just

ordinary little fish, but they have on the dorsal fin on the back...

About 15 cm long.

B What would they be, about that long?

J Yeah.

B I mean, obviously they grow from babies, but you'd get 'em up something like that.

J Yeah. About 15.

B They look a little bit like a little trout really, didn't they?

J Yeah.

B But on their backs, instead of like a lot of fish they just have the dorsal fin, and quite often it nearly permanently or with stang fish it goes flat to the spine, and when it's alarmed or upset or whatever, it puts it up like a black sail, and it's got points, and it's got poison in the points. Grandad had a partly damaged left hand with one, didn't he? Grandad Woodhouse.

J Yeah, he got stung on the middle of his palm, so his hand never really opened properly.

B It stung him here, so he couldn't open his hand properly because it stung right there.

And would they get accidentally caught then in the nets?

B Oh, yeah, I mean let's face it, no-one wonder if they were in a bad temper when they... they'd been dragged along the sea bed, put in a net, choked on a [inaud], no

wonder they wanted to have a go, was there?

J Mm.

B It was like conger eels. My dad said they were bad-tempered as well. They'd rear up. If you caught a conger eel, he said they'd rear up and spit and hiss at you. But same thing. Minding its own business, and then along comes a shrimp net and drags you up and not happy.

So what duties did you used to do then on the boats when you went out with your dad, Barbara?

B Oh, I was allowed... steering, predominantly. I was allowed to steer it. He used to... because I didn't understand all the well compasses and things. I mean, I knew what they were, but he'd say, "There you go love, you steer between Barrow and Peel Island. If you head in that direction." Or if we were going the other way, if you're between Heysham Harbour and perhaps the priory church...

J Mm.

B He'd point me in the right direction and you'd just steer it. And he'd let me... I mean, I was allowed to do things when we were cleaning and boiling and things. But he was just a bit cautious in case there was the odd thing that wasn't too nice. 'Cause it was Granddad Woodhouse got a body in the net, didn't he?

J Mm.

B Once. He got a dead body in the net.

J 'Cause sometimes if you were wiggling about, he'd say, "Go back and dot the I."

B Yeah.

J “Oh, I thought you were writing your name.” (laughs)

B I remember once he'd... when he got Kelpie. When he got Kelpie. We lost Mascot and got Kelpie. I was never seasick. I absolutely... didn't bother me whether it was calm or rough or anything, I was never seasick, apart from the one time. We'd gone out quite early, and he said, “Go and get your head down for a few minutes.” And I mean it was very basic, but under Kelpie's bow...

This is the name of the boat.

B Yes, she was...

So Kelpie, is that with... how do you spell that?

B K-E-L-P-I-E. It's a water sprite. And she was a bit bigger than the one we'd lost. And under her bow, there was two, basically two planks, one at each side, on like ropes that drop down. And I crawled on one of these things to have a few minutes sleep. Oh, gosh, I was sick. And it was diesel fumes. Because the engine running.

J Hmm, hmm.

B And it had nowhere to go. It was going under the bow, and I was sleeping. It was the only time I can remember being seasick. That was horrible. The water itself didn't bother me, but the diesel fumes sure as heck made me ill.

And Jean, how about you? Did you get seasick, and what did you used to do? Did you go out on the boat just like Barbara did?

J Not as much as Barbara, because when I was the age when Barbara was going out,

we weren't living in Morecambe. But no. My dad was very careful really about what you did, he was very safety-minded. Because they're not very big, Morecambe nobbies. And the first boat, Mascot, she was a 28 foot, she was really a one-man boat. And she was absolutely beautifully organised for one person to use her.

B He liked fishing by himself, didn't he?

J Yeah, and er... so really quite a lot of the time you were watching, but you were pretty much keeping out of the way.

B He used to drag us behind the boat on that rope thing, didn't he? He set up like a rope and a big piece of wood, like a tiller handle, wasn't it?

J Hmm.

B And threw it over the stern of the boat, so we could go overboard and hold onto it while he was pulling us through the water.

I remember once I was swimming in the middle of the bay, I was happy as Larry. He said, "Go on then, if you want to get in." 'Cause he'd take us out for pleasure as well, you know, on a nice day, "We'll go and get the boat and we'll go out." I was swimming around happy as anything, and I don't know what made me say, "Any idea how deep is it, Dad?" He said, "Eeh, I don't know, 25, 30 foot." "What?!" (J laughs) I wanna come back!" You know. "Couldn't touch the bottom, I'm not staying." I was alright till he told me how deep it was.

And Barbara, when we met last time, you said something about the sound of bicycle wheels.

B Oh, that was carts. When you went out in the early hours of the morning, I mean all the fishermen, you had to take coal for the boiler, 'cause you had to have hot water to

boil your shrimps. So they took coal for the boiler, they had to have diesel for the engines. And they'd... well, everything they needed for the full day out. They might take something to eat and cans of tea and, which they warmed in the shrimp boiler, they'd hand them over the edge of the shrimp boiler to warm the tea up. But you had hand carts to put all this in. And my dad would say to me sometimes if we were going... I'd given it all this going down the street... "Quiet." And he had bicycle tyres on his cart. He said, "Just because we're up doesn't mean the rest of the world has to be." And he was very quiet (J: Mm) going about from A to B. I mean, he was absolutely right, because it was unsocial hours, wasn't it? But yeah, "It doesn't mean the rest of the world has to be up."

So what time of a morning was it, then?

B Oh, it could be anything. Half one, two o'clock, as early as that, and then it could go 3, 4, 5, 6. It would all depend on your tides, when your tide was running. 'Cause you went out with it and came back with it.

J Mm.

B So you were completely reliant. I mean, every... it was religion, wasn't it, listening to the shipping forecast?

J Yes. Mm.

B Which is still, I think, the most accurate forecast you can get, isn't it?

J Mm.

B The shipping forecast on the BBC. It's spot on. You know. If there was a storm coming, it came. You know, there was no messing, they knew it was coming.

J Mm.

B 'Cause there was one year they lost a lot of Fleetwood boats, didn't they? Up the Minches way.

J Mm.

B There was a really bad storm and they lost... I think there was four or five trawlers went down that time. Very distressing for everybody.

Where and when was that then?

B That would be late 50s, early 60s, something like that? Fleetwood Museum'll have all that.

J Mm.

But you would only be very young.

B I wasn't very old. I remember my dad was upset. There was quite a few trawlers lost. One of them was one of the Marr boats from Fleetwood. They all had the name 'red' something, weren't they? They all had the name 'red' whatever, the Marr boats at Fleetwood.

J Yeah.

So what's the difference? What's a Marr boat?

B No, it was the name of the company.

Oh, sorry, OK.

B Yeah, it was the name of the company. But the Fleetwood boats went out for days. They went up north and they went out for days, completely different fishing. Because my dad occasionally, when they were passing... They would pass occasionally when they were going out or coming back, wouldn't they? And they were... it was great respect on both sides. They thought my dad was mad as a hatter for going out on his own. And he thought they were crazy for going up towards Iceland. And they were completely different fishing styles.

And Marr, is that with just one R or two?

B M-A-R-R. It was a company. They owned boats at Fleetwood. But that'll all be... 'cause it's a good museum, that one at Fleetwood.

J Yes, it is, yes.

B There'll be all the details in that one. It was erm... 'cause it was hell of a big port was Fleetwood.

I think we'll leave it there for this afternoon and then we'll pick up another time.

Track 3

B Right, well... I don't know about my grandfather, but my father went to Morecambe Bay Primary School until he was about 13, 14, something like that. And then by shrimping traditional, cockling or whatever you were doing, you went and joined the father and learnt the trade off the father. So from being a very, very small child, really, a bit like in factories, in the cotton mills, you would go in and learn the trade, and that was you more or less for the rest of your life. Erm, and the only way you could do it was by going out every day and learning the Bay with your father, your uncle, whoever it was. You'd to physically go out and learn your trade. Erm, basically that's what they did. I mean, there's no other way of describing it, is there?

J Mm. No.

B And of course they also got involved, because of the way the Bay is and the way fishing boats are, they also got involved with the lifeboats. Because we lost, when my dad was relatively young, he'd only be about 20, 21, something like that, when they lost the (ph) Blanche?

J Hmm.

B One of their shrimp boats got very badly damaged, and they went out in a boat called the Rescue to try and get her. My father and his brother were actually on the Blanche, weren't they?

J Hmm.

B And people trying to get her off. The Blanche sank. And Granddad was watching it from the top at Green Street, 'cause people said how awful it must have been for him to watch two of his sons in a rescue mission to get the boat. But they lost the boat but kept their lives. So they both got on the rescue boat.

J Hmm.

So when was this?

B The early 20s. We'll have the date somewhere, but I can't remember the exact date. But it was... basically, after that, the boat was called the Rescue, she was a general little lifeboat. And then a few years later, Lady Priestley decided they needed a proper fishermen's lifeboat. And she had the William Priestley, the Sir William Priestley, which is now at the Maritime Museum, she had that built specially for Morecambe shrimp fishermen. So they had their own personal lifeboat.

And the boat was called the Blanche.

B The boat that my father and grandfather lost was called the Blanche that was named after one of the sisters. The middle sister, Blanche was.

And who was on the boat then, when it started sinking?

J Well, she would... one of the things... they moored up all the fishing boats in the... what was a channel at that time, which was between... roughly between where the Town Hall is and where the end of the Stone Jetty is. That area was where all the moorings were. And if you got a northwest gale, and they dragged their anchors and broke free, then it just blew them up against the promenade, and they just broke up against the promenade. So that was why they would try to get on her, to get her away from breaking up. And sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

B Because that's what the William Priestley did, isn't it?

J Yes (phone rings).

B Oh, gosh.

J Excuse me, I think that could be the pet shop.

So you were just telling me the story about the Blanche and when it sunk.

B Mm-hm.

J Yes.

B Well, that was basically it, you know. They went out to try and get on her and save

her, and the little... the Rescue, it was only another little... basically a shrimp boat... they all went to try and salvage the Blanche but they couldn't. So they got back on the Rescue and come ashore. There was nothing they could do. Once they start breaking up, you can't do a lot about it really. It's happened to a lot of the boats. As I said, my father's next boat, unfortunately, the Mascot, she broke up in a similar way, in a very bad storm. We went down to the top, and we watched her banging herself on the bottom. And I remember getting rather upset about it, and my dad said, "It's no good, love, she's gone." And she sank.

J Hmm.

B So there was nothing you could do. And they broke up sometimes, like Jean said, on the sea wall. When they got the William Priestley lifeboat, one of the jobs that did, if the north-westerly or whatever was coming up the Bay, they were the worst storms... if a shrimp boat broke away from its anchors, it would come up, obviously, onto the sea wall. So what they would have to do was call out - they were all shrimp fishermen – call them out, get the lifeboat off her moorings, go and throw ropes onto the shrimp boat that was coming up against the sea wall, and use the power of the William Priestley's engines to try and pull her off.

They were successful quite a lot of the time. One or two broke up, but they saved quite a lot.

That must have been really hard to see a boat physically sinking, when, you know, so much had happened on it.

B It is, it's very sad, I think it's sad with anything like that. You see the liners going.

J Mm.

B And you know, big, big ocean liners. It's very sad to see them end up as like skeletons

if you will. Because they've all had a working successful life. And it's like a grieving process, I suppose, isn't it?

J Mm.

B Losing your livelihood like that.

J One of the things fishermen did, of course, if you did lose a boat, then you could often go...

B With someone else.

J With someone else. You know, make it a two man trip for a bit. That worked quite well, I think. It was...

B Yes. They covered each other's backs, didn't they?

J Yes.

B If one lost a living, the others would help, by letting them go with him.

And is that what your father did at the time?

B I'm not sure, because it was such a long time ago. I think he went... I think he went with Amos Willacy.

J Mm, I think he did, yeah.

B I think. Because they were very, very good friends. They grew up together from being babies.

J Mm.

B And I think he went with Amos Willacy. But erm... they all stuck together, didn't they? I mean, I think he fished with Gilbert occasionally, and Dennis Aldren went with him sometimes, didn't he?

So, 'cause one thing I picked up on was that, like you said, it's very much a family tradition.

B Mm.

And I got the impression that families stuck to family, and they never really kind of shared or went out together, but they did used to... the fishermen did used to...

B Oh, yes, sometimes.

Combine their trips.

B I mean, it was more usual to get brothers and sons and fathers from a family, but others did fish together. As I say, my father fished with his best friend for a while. And he also fished... Dennis Aldren eventually went more into salmon fishing and... oh... baulks.

J Yes.

B The baulk nets on the Bay.

J Mm.

B But he did go fishing with my father quite a lot.

J Hmm.

B So they did interact in some ways, but it was more usual for fathers and sons and brothers to stick together, 'cause we had the... the Willacy's had boys, didn't they?

J Yes.

B Erm... oh, who else was there? Let me think.

J Gerrard's

B Gerrard's. There was boys, wasn't there? Twins.

Is that Gerrard's with a G?

J Yes.

B Yes.

G-E-R...

B G-E-R-R-A-R-D. Erm... I think Benny Woodhouse fished with one of his relations.

J Yes, and Mount's did, didn't they?

B And all the Mounts fished together, yes. Baxters, of course.

J Yes.

B And they were all... it was nice, because they were very inclusive, weren't they? Because one of the Baxters, unfortunately, was... he was a huge lad, really built like a

brick wall. But whether it was in his birth... something had affected his brain a bit. So basically he was like a schoolboy. He never really grew up. But he was always out with his brother, fishing. He... you know. He had really quite a happy, successful life, because they just went out and fished together.

And can you remember their Christian names?

B (sighs) Jack and Sam.

J That sounds about right.

B I think.

J Yeah.

B I think it was Jack and Sam.

J Mm.

B But it was so nice, because in a lot of different areas of the British society, they would sort of hide people away or, you know, treat them slightly different. But they didn't. It was everybody treat him the same. And he went fishing like everybody else. And if there was a social do, just the same, you know. It was a very inclusive family organisation.

J Mm.

B It was nice. Very, very pleasant.

J When it was a big community, of course, they had a lot of... they had the fishermen's choir, didn't they?

B Yes. Oh, yes.

I was going to ask about social occasions and groups and societies.

B Not much in social, was there, really?

J No. Not that I can... that did tend to be on a family basis.

B It did, yes. But the fishermen's choir, they came from all the families.

J Yeah.

B Absolutely all of them. A lot of it was church based, wasn't it, originally? Because most of the fishermen, for some reason or other, they were Methodist. They built two big churches for them: Green Street, which is the bottom of where I live now. That was a... well, still is a church with the most enormous sort of school performance room upstairs. And Clarence Street, that was a big fishermen's church as well.

J Mm.

B And in that way, you did have a certain social... like Christmas, they would put concerts on, erm, that everybody went to. But that was about it. Apart from concerts and marriages and things, you didn't have much of a social get-together. Apart from the men doing the choir. It was all work-related apart from that, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B The socialising with the men would be... we talked before about the pleasure boats, and the lifeboat, and the cross-bay swim, and the (ph) intro swims, they would all get involved with those. But it was all based on the Bay, rather than...

And were they very religious, then? Did they attend church, the churches regularly?

B Some of them. Not everyone. But they were well-attended, were the churches. I mean, we didn't see that side of it, did we, because my mother was Anglican. And so were brought up with Mummy's belief at Bolton-le-Sands church. But Daddy wasn't bothered one way or the other really, I don't think, you know. But they seemed... I mean, they were obviously well attended, because they had the choirs and the concerts and things so...

And what do you remember of the fishermen's choir?

B I don't remember anything. It had gone when I was born.

J No, it was hearsay for me as well.

Right.

J Because an awful lot of things, I think, finished, erm, probably not long before the Second World War.

B Yes.

J Because I think that was a real game-changer, in a lot of ways.

B Mm. The 50s and 60s was basically the end of things for the boats, wasn't it? There was very few boats in the 60s.

J Mm.

B About half a dozen, maybe.

J Mm.

B They just faded away. Well, it was such hard work, and the boys could get regular work ashore, you see. They weren't going to... my dad said, "Who's going to go out there and do what I do, and no guarantee of a wage at the end of it?" Which they just wouldn't do. And you can't blame them. It is hard work, isn't it?

J Mm.

B And society changed. I mean, all the fishing areas changed. Hull changed, Fleetwood changed, Grimsby, the Scottish areas, they all changed.

And so could you tell me a little bit about the hearsay then? What you remember about the fishermen's choir? Not your physical memories, but what you've been told.

B I really don't know a great deal about them. Apart from... oh, one particular man... oh, gosh, what was he called?

J Happy Jack.

B Happy Jack, yes.

J Yes.

B There was a man they nicknamed Happy Jack, and apparently he was *the* singer.

J Mm. Had a beautiful voice, apparently.

B Yeah. I think didn't they occasionally sing on the promenade and on the beach, as

well as in the church?

J I think so, yes.

B I think it was a bit... the Salvation Army, as well, they did that sort of thing.

J Well, we still had a fishermen's choir hymn book, didn't we? With the things... they were particularly chosen pieces to do with the sea. You know? They sang...

Oh, wouldn't it be fantastic, if there was some recordings of it hidden away somewhere?

B That's highly unlikely. They would still be going when the carnival was very big.

J Mm.

B So I presume that maybe they had some involvement in the carnival period. Because it was massive then, wasn't it, in the 30s?

J Mm. Could have done.

B I think, from what I've heard, there was an awful lot of floats down Morecambe front in the 30s, when the carnivals came. It was a massive thing. But there again, as Jean said, the war came, and of course there were so many changes.

And could you talk me through then your father's fishing processes? So you said he was predominantly a shrimping fisherman.

B Yes.

Can you tell me about the way in which he fished, in terms of equipment and

areas of the Bay?

B Well, in terms of equipment, your boat... they varied in the... the boats varied in size. Mascot would be about a 30 footer, something like that.

J She was 28.

B Was she 28? And then Kelpie would be about 35, 37, she was bigger, wasn't she, Kelpie?

J Yes.

B Predominantly, what you needed before you went out, you needed coal for your boiler to boil your water. You needed diesel for your engine to keep an engine going. What else? Oh, your ropes always had to be in good order. Your nets had to be checked regularly. You know, if they tore the nets they would bring them ashore. Either they'd do it themselves or they would take them net maker at the Trawlers to be repaired. But that was what you sort of took down to the boat. But once you got on the boat, it was a beam trawl net, which was a huge, long... like a tree trunk, if you will, with what you'd call iron ends. I don't know what shape you'd call them really. They were two pieces of iron on each end of the wooden log. And attached to that, you would have a net that was the full width, and then gradually shaped down into like a funnel. And at the bottom of it, it would be like the full length of the beam, but the bottom of the net, where it opened, you would have big wooden bobbins. They were literally like huge cotton bobbins, massive things. And they would roll... when the nets went over, they would roll along the bottom of the Bay, and pull anything, you know, anything that was on the bottom of the Bay would go into the net. And the tail-end, as they call it, the narrow end of the net, would be tied up to make sure nothing could get out.

When it was pulled back onto the boat, with the help of the capstan, then the tail end would be undone, and anything that was in the net was dropped onto the deck of the

boat, into the cleaning area. But erm, that was basically all the equipment they had, really. Apart from they would have a compass and things like that. But the equipment was predominantly coal and oil to keep things going on the boat, and the net, which of course was absolutely vital. And the majority of the fishermen could do their own nets. In fact, the house I'm still in, that had a netting shed, didn't it, at the back?

J Mm, yes.

B It was still there when I was a child.

And the shrimps, were they put in any specific boxes or special baskets or anything?

B Everything came onto...

J It was like a big tray on the deck.

B Yeah.

J With wooden sides. And the content of the tail end dropped into it. And they... at that point, the majority of stuff in there was alive. And the shrimps were then riddled over the side, so that the small stuff...

B Went back into the Bay.

J Went back into the Bay.

B Because that's your next catch.

J And at the same time, you were chucking out rubbish that you didn't want. So seaweed, crabs, all sorts of odds and ends. So they went back into the water.

B If the baby fish were still alive, they went back, didn't they? *If* they were still alive, but some of the babies didn't survive. But the big fish...

J But the seagulls followed them anyway.

B Ooh, yes. They got the scraps. Seals and seagulls, they loved it.

J And fish within the catching range. Because you know you're not supposed to land fish over certain... under certain dimensions.

B They brought those home, didn't they?

J If they were worth...

B Mm. If they were big enough, they'd bring them home.

J Yes.

B And if there was quite a lot, they would sell them, the shops would sell them, the Trawlers or whoever would sell them. Otherwise we would have them for tea, or dinner, or whatever.

So what kind of fish were they?

B A lot of plaice, wasn't there?

J Yes. A lot of plaice.

B Garbs, which are similar to plaice but a bit rougher. Sole.

J Because of the way he fished, largely flatfish.

B Because everything came off the seabed.

J Because you were looking at low feeders, yeah.

B And I mean, there wasn't much else that came out that was really edible, was there?

J No.

B Because it's a sandy bottom, so you're not going to get much else down there.

And how far out did the boats go then to do this?

B Well, they covered the entire Bay, didn't they?

J Yes.

B And they would also go round, perhaps as far as... like, just up above Barrow, wouldn't they?

J Yes.

B And they'd... I mean, it wasn't often, but they sometimes, if the fishing was bad, they'd go and try down off places like Blackpool. Fleetwood, Blackpool, down that way. To see what there was further down, but they didn't go any further. Because you've got to remember they were going out on a tide and coming back on a tide, two of them usually in the boat, sometimes only one. So you couldn't really do much else. The only other time they went further was when they, for some reason, early part of the 20th century, probably in the 1920s, would it be the late 20s, they went to Maryport. And they actually moored up at Maryport. So I presume they must've been doing something like herring

fishing or something up there.

J Or following mackerel, perhaps.

B Or mackerel. There was something. Because we were having a bad time here, they went and moored up at Maryport and slept on the boats, and fished out of Maryport. And people from Scotland came down I think as well. There must have been a lack of fishing in general, because we got... there was people from Annan as well. I think a woman from Annan married into our family somewhere along the line.

J But basically the majority of the work was all within the Bay.

B It was all the Bay.

J From Lune Deep, that's sort of Heysham way.

B That's in the harbour, further down than the harbour.

J And the places... it depended. You couldn't have said, "If it's April, there'll be fishing in X," because it was much more variable than that. It was dependent on the amount of fresh water coming down the rivers, and the wind conditions. Because even when they'd got engines, that made a difference to the way the water, the tide was running. So they'd talk about fishing in the Kent channel, or Grange channel, or Ulverston channel.

B Duddon.

J Or the Duddon.

B Yeah.

J Or they'd talk about just going locally. And then Heysham Lake.

B Yeah. It was a case of going... sometimes they would go out and not get very much. So you would move from one area to another to see if the shrimps would come there. It was chasing them round until you found where they were. Because my dad said once, he said, "I swear the little beggars are burying themselves today." Because he wasn't getting any, and he'd tried various places, and he swore they were burying themselves in the sand and not coming out.

J But there wasn't really any particular pattern to... the seasonal variations, with the spring rise and the back end...

B Yes, spring and back end were the best times, weren't they?

J Were the best times.

B That was good shrimping. Well, normally good shrimping times. I mean, I think (ph) Marc and Ray go out and do not too bad sometimes in summer now, don't they? Because they go out all the time to check and see what's out there.

J Yeah.

B I see (ph) Marc out a lot.

J Mm. But it's... and then of course, if the shrimps got very difficult to find, then they'd perhaps change their nets and they'd go fishing... fish fishing.

I was going to ask what the other fish...

B White baiting.

J Whitebait. Or sometimes just for flat fish.

Was that always kind of a backup?

B Yes. That was your summer backup.

J Mm, yeah.

B But white baiting was a different sort of fishing, you see. Because with white baiting, you stayed stationery and the tide brought the whitebait to you, whereas with shrimping the boat moved and pulled the trawl behind it. So you physically pulled along the bottom. But with white baiting, you stayed more or less stationery and they came to you.

And would you use different nets?

J Yes.

B Yes. I can't remember what whitebait nets were like.

J I can't really remember whitebait nets.

B I know they didn't have the...

J The thing I remember best about nets is when they had that bit at the back of the trawlers, where they dipped them in the...

B Oh, yes.

J Red (ph) leaden stuff. Linseed. Before you got...

B The netting shed, wasn't it? Ernie was up there, wasn't he, Ernie Nicholson.

J Before you got the synthetic fibres, like couylene and things that nets are made from

now, they were made from standard sort of string, if you like. And so, for durability, they'd be dipped in this... I think it was something like red lead and linseed oil.

B There was linseed in it. And they came out red, didn't they?

J They did. And they came out quite bright orange out of it. And I can remember them hanging up.

B Hanging.

J And that smell of the oil and...

B Yeah. 'Cause my dad used to sometimes hang his nets over the backyard wall.

J Yeah (laughs).

B Yeah. And he'd sometimes hang his ropes over the backyard wall, the rope that he'd used to pull the nets in. I remember Mummy once saying to him, "You'll lose them." (as Dad) "Eeh, you don't trust anybody, our Jenny." (As Mum) "I'm telling you, you'll lose them." Sure enough... (J laughs) went out in the morning, they'd gone. Somebody had nicked his ropes. He was not happy.

J No.

You mentioned Ernie Nicholson. Now, I've heard that name before. Is Ernie still alive or... ?

B D'you know, I haven't seen Ernie Nicholson. I don't know whether he is or not. Because as a young man he went fishing with my father.

J Mm.

B And they were very close for quite a long time. But Ernie had a very bad accident. He got his arm caught somehow in the engine.

Of a fishing boat?

B Yeah, he was... he had a very nasty injury, didn't he?

J Yes, he did, hmm.

B I can't remember which arm it was now. But it did a lot of damage. So it meant he couldn't go out fishing. So what he did, he opened a shop, basically fishing equipment and things like that, down near the County Garage.

J Mm.

B Which seemed to do quite nicely. But I don't know what happened to him after that. You see, we don't have many fishing families to talk to each other now. He'd be older than me. Would he be your age or... ?

J I can't think how old he'd be.

B But it was because he had this bad accident. As I say, he went learning to fish with my father when he was young. And then he'd this really nasty accident, so he couldn't go again. You know, he couldn't continue fishing. He had to go into the land side of it. Yes, he did quite well at that. He was a nice lad.

So going back onto the boat then, the shrimps have been riddled. And do they go straight into the boiler?

J Yes.

And how long would they be kept for? Just basically until they'd caught enough and then went home to pick them?

B Well, I suppose...

J There'd be two governing things. I mean, one would be watching the tide, because you'd have to have time to get back. And so you'd have to know where you were. And...

B How good a catch you had, wasn't it? If you'd got a really, really good catch in one net, you know, that might do you. But on the other hand, you might have to trawl two or three times. And that was quite difficult, because you'd all the physical work of putting the nets out, bringing them back, you know. It's physically hard work.

J So the process would have to be done in the tide window.

B Because you'd go out with the tide and come back with it, you see.

J And... yeah.

And then back home, can you just talk me through then what happened once the boat came in and the shrimps?

J Well, what they'd've done on the boat, the shrimps would've been boiled, and they'd've been put in a washer.

B Yes, they put them in sacks to cool them, didn't they?

J Set them in net sacks, things.

B And put them over the side of the boat.

J And put them over the side of the boat to cool them quickly. And then they were kept as cool as possible.

B Because then they hardened up, didn't they, the shells?

J Yes.

B If you cooled them in the salt water, the shell tended to harden up nicely, and they'd be easier to pick, weren't they?

J Yeah. And then erm, they'd... it depended, really, what you were going to do next. If they weren't many, you probably took them all home to pick. But if it was a good catch, you'd go and weigh in at the Trawlers and leave some rough there, and then take what you wanted home to pick.

B 'Cause some... we had... we had one or two ladies who picked for my dad, didn't we?

J Mm.

B Members of fishing families who... perhaps widows or... whatever. They'd bring them home, he brings some home to pick at home. But you'd also take some rough shrimps round to one or two of these ladies to pick them for us. It helped them out, they got a little bit of money for it, and it helped my dad out because they were done quicker.

J Mm.

Can you remember their names then? The ladies that used to do that for you?

J (sighs)

B Alongside the ex-servicemen's club... oh... it wasn't Mrs... no, it wasn't Mrs Smalley (ph), was it? No. I can't think. I can see her, and I can't think of her name. I remember taking things round to her and I can't think of their names.

J No, I didn't do that. So I know where she lived but I don't know anything else about her.

B Yeah, she lived in the little back alley...

J Yeah, mm.

B Up the side of... oh, lord, I can't think of her name.

J No.

B Was she a Hodgson?

J Could've been.

B That rings a bell, Hodgson, it could've been Hodgson. But... I can see her! Little woman, dark hair, dark glasses.

J Yeah.

B Oh... No, I can't think. But a lot of it was done at home.

J My mother would be ready, she'd have the oil cloth cover on the table and everything would be ready.

B We had a big pine table, didn't we?

J Yeah.

B A really big one. And she covered it with a huge piece of linoleum. And then the chairs round it. And my dad would bring them home in sacks, bring them up... they'd bring them up in the handcart, wouldn't they, in sacks?

J Mm.

B And then they'd tip them perhaps into buckets, so they were easier to come and pour on the table. And then you'd just pick them until you'd finished.

And this could be any time of day?

B It was usually lunchtime or just a bit later, because they tended to go out earlier in the morning, didn't they?

J Yeah.

B Than later in the day. They would go out trawling the early tide, which could be any time up to 6 or 7 o'clock, couldn't it?

J Yeah.

B But erm... it was the earlier part of the day rather than the later part of the day.

J And generally you would be looking to have finished picking by about 6 o'clock in the evening.

B Yeah. If it was a huge catch sometimes.

J If it was a big catch, it could be as long as that. But the thing about shrimps is that you

have to move fast because they are...

B Or they go off (laughs).

J Yes. They're quite a sensitive catch.

B Because they did have a... after... when the Morecambe Trawlers got going properly, they had a shrimp picking shed, didn't they?

J Yeah.

B They employed fishermen's wives to go down to the Trawlers and pick them on site.

So this is like a factory?

J Yeah.

B Yeah, it was.

Morecambe Trawlers, was that what it was called?

J Mm.

B Yeah.

And when was that around then?

B It started in the mid-20s, I think, didn't it?

J Yes, something like that. And...

B And 60s would it finish?

J Yeah, I should think so. They had (inaud).

B They had chairs, didn't they?

J Yes, at the bottom of (inaud) Street and Clarence Street.

B It's gone now. They still have a painting on the wall next to the site where it was of a fisherman in sou'wester and oilskins. They put a big painting on the wall there. But they knocked it down and... it's a car park, isn't it?

J Mm. I think so.

B A car park of some sort.

J And that... that really helped.

B 'Cause that did everything, didn't it? They had a netting shed, they had somewhere where they could pick the shrimps, they had the kitchens, where relations of fishing families quite often... I mean, I was allowed to go down sometimes and watch with Mummy.

J Mm.

B And you're allowed to do a bit sometimes. They had big vats.

J For potting, mm.

B Where they warmed the shrimps through and then put them in little pots. And you pressed them down with a little round wooden... you had like a little handle on it and you

twisted it and pressed the shrimps, you compressed the shrimps right down. And then a layer of butter poured over the top. And then a little piece of greaseproof. And then the lid of the tub. And then they were all stacked away to go. As I say, predominantly Young's would take them.

J But they had...

B But we had our own fridges and freezers.

J I was going to say, they had fridges and freezers. And then the fish shop.

B Yeah, they had their own fish outlet.

J Mm. So it was... yeah.

And then it closed down in about the 60s?

J Mm.

B Would it be the late 60s? Early 70s? Maybe the early 70s, I'm not sure.

Is that because business was declining or... ?

B There was hardly anybody left fishing really.

J No, the fishermen were declining.

B The fishermen were declining. And of course, Mark... they started getting their own outlets, didn't they?

J Mm.

B The old fishermen were retiring or dying or whatever. There weren't many young men stayed in it. Very, very few young men stayed in it. And the ones that did stay had their own outlets. They had their own shops, which is the only way really to survive it. You can't really make a living at it if you're relying on somebody else. But erm... at its height, it was doing very well, because I mean the turnover was quite phenomenal.

J Mm.

B There'd be a lot of women, you know, 6 or 8 women at least working in the potting shed. And it was a good system.

J Mm.

B It was a good turnover, and then as we say we had our own fridge freezers. They did once bring, I think it was from Norway, they brought a machine that they said could pick shrimps (laughs). That was a bit of a disaster, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B Because it blew the shells off them, predominantly, but it was nowhere near as efficient as hand picking. But of course, what you've got to remember about shrimps, when you're hand picking them, they come in a variety of sizes. Some are quite small. When you pull them full length, they might only be a couple of inches long or two and a half inches. Others, the big cobs could be yay big (miming), you know, four or five inches long at least. Well, a mechanical machine isn't really very good at deciding how big the creature is it's got in front of it. So that didn't last very long at all. It was still hand picking (laughs).

J Mm.

So in the Woodhouse household, who would be picking the shrimps for your father?

B Mummy, Daddy, me, Jean. And quite often if people came to call.

J Yeah, they'd sit down and pick a few.

B Yeah. If anybody came to see us. Mrs Brown used to come, didn't she?

J Yeah.

B If they came to see us and you'd say "pull a chair up and pick a few shrimps." So it was... oh, and you listened to the radio while you were doing it, didn't you?

J Mm, mm.

B You listened to various radio programmes and, as I say, friends would come, and you'd just sit, it was like a social gathering when you were picking shrimps quite often. Yeah, there were certain things that you always listened to.

J Mm.

What did you listen to then?

B Showband was one of them, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B Workers' Playtime.

J Afternoon Plays.

B Yes, Afternoon Plays. If it was early enough, you might get Mrs Dale's Diary, mightn't you?

J Yeah, mm.

B What was that one... one afternoon... I have a feeling we were picking and Billy... was it Billy Cotton? Wolverhampton Wanderers were playing in Europe and there was only two minutes to go. And because the BBC, being the BBC, two o'clock, off (clicks fingers). Forget it. Two minutes to play. And the following week, they were singing "Who turned the Wolves off to put the Showband on?" weren't they? (J laughs) Because the BBC clicked everything off two minutes before full time, much to everybody's fury, because they lived rigidly by the rules. And er... I think it was Billy Cotton, that one. I think it was Billy Cotton Band Show.

And what did you used to chat about then while you were picking shrimps?

B Oh, gosh. That could be absolutely anything.

J Yeah.

B Relations. What you'd read, what you'd done, what you'd done at school.

And it was predominantly women but the men used to sometimes help too?

B Oh yeah, oh yeah. My dad was a good picker, wasn't he?

J Oh, I don't think... erm...

B I think all men picked shrimps.

J I can't think of anyone who didn't pick.

B Everybody got involved.

J Yeah, yeah.

B I dare say you would get... 'cause like in any sort of small society you'd get men who perhaps didn't pull their weight quite as much as others, but it was quite common for men to pick shrimps as well. 'Cause my dad had a different picking habit to my mum, didn't he?

J Yeah.

B When my dad was picking... I never could do it like my dad could. We followed Mummy, didn't we?

J Mm.

B But she was... she was good at... she could pick shrimps, could my mother. But my dad had a funny habit. When he pulled... you know, the (inaud) of the head off... he flicked the shrimp with his thumb somehow onto the pile, didn't he? I never knew how he did that. Completely different. Where we would pick them and put the shrimp down, my dad would flick them over with his right thumb, and I don't know how he did that.

So what makes a good shrimp picker then? What techniques do you need to use?

B Nimble fingers, basically, isn't it?

J Yes, I think it is.

B And when you've got the first catch of the year...

J I think what makes a lot... I think what makes a lot of difference is how well boiled they were. It was horrible if you ever had to ones that were rather soft shelled.

B You had to peel them.

J Because that was so time consuming. Because the principle really is just you get hold of them, you know how to hold them behind the head, you squeeze the tail, and pull. And that pulls most of the shell off the shrimp, and then you just pull the rest of it out of the head end. But if they were soft...

B Soft, they were horrible, weren't they? You'd to peel it off. Ugh.

J Soft. You'd get a little bit off the tail and then you'd faff about getting...

B Yeah. Fortunately my dad was really good at boiling, wasn't he?

J Yes, he was.

So was that because they'd been boiled too much or not enough then, if they were soft?

B Well, it could be either, I suppose, couldn't it?

J Mm.

B And there again, I suppose, you don't know what happened to them in the Bay. There might be...

J And there were certain times of year when you got quite a few soft ones. That was I think was when they were, they shells were, you know, their shells were changing, but er...

B But if they were properly...

J If they were properly boiled...

B Properly boiled, they'd... as we say, boiled and then cooled over the side, and they were cooled in salt water, and they seemed to go nice and hard so you could pick them quite well.

J It was important really knowing, having the knack to get hold of them and squeeze the tail so that you only had to do two things: pull the tail off...

B Pull the head off...

J And pull the fish out.

B Yep.

J Otherwise, if it broke in the middle, you had a little bit of shell left round the shrimp which you called its saddle, and you had to pull that off.

B Pull them off.

J Separately. (B laughs) And then you got whiskers on your fingers and you'd to wipe that. Ugh.

B And if you'd got... I don't know what they were, next to the whiskers, they'd like little prongs.

J Yes, they had, yeah.

B And if you'd finger on one of them, that hurt.

J Yes. Mm.

B And the first shrimps of the year, the first good catches of the spring, I remember it didn't happen to me, it probably didn't happen to you, but Mummy...

J Mm.

B Her finger ends went very, very sore and split from having to sit doing these shrimps for so long because her fingers weren't used to it. As time went on, they hardened up, you know. But the first few...

J Yeah.

B Her finger ends would go really sore.

J But you got a knack, didn't you, of how you liked them in front of you.

B You pulled them. You pulled them towards you.

J You pulled them towards you so that you had a workstation.

And did it get quite competitive ever?

B Not really.

Who could pick the most shrimps in one sitting?

B Unless... well, my dad very occasionally, I don't know whether he did it with you, he said "Sixpence a mug." If I picked a mug full, I'd get sixpence. That worked (both laugh).

And the boiling was always done on the boat then?

J Yes.

So they'd always come ready?

B Yes. Before my dad's time, they brought them ashore, didn't they?

J Mm.

B Because that shed we had in Townley Street, when they pulled it down, there was a little boiler in the corner.

J Yes.

B a little brick boiler.

J Mm.

B So they would bring them home in previous times. But the majority from what we remember, it was done on the boats.

And from what you can remember then, did the process change at all during your father's lifetime of when he was going out?

J No.

B No. Prior to that, as I say, quite often they would bring them ashore. But once the boats got equipped with the boiler, the engine... 'cause there was a transition. They were all sail boats at the beginning of the century and then gradually the engines came

in. Perkins diesels, weren't they, a lot of them?

J Mm, yeah.

B And you could do everything on the boat apart from picking them.

J Mm.

B But prior to that, they did bring them ashore to pick them. But I don't remember my dad doing anything else other than...

J No.

B Catching, sorting, cleaning, boiling, cooling, bringing ashore. It was always the same.

In your knowledge then, has there been any sort of significant changes in that process then even to this present day?

J No.

B No. The only difference is with the lads now, they're gas boilers, aren't they?

J Mm.

B I think. I'm pretty sure Malc and Ray (ph) said they... instead of coal, they have some... I don't understand it, but they have a more modern way of heating the boilers. But the principle's the same. They still do the same thing.

And did he ever go out... I know it wasn't that specific to this area of the Bay recently, but when he was fishing, did he ever do any kind of cockling or musselling?

B Not really.

J Only if we wanted some.

B Yeah. They didn't overlap much, did they?

J No.

B There were fishing families who went cockling, the fishing families who did musselling, fishing families that went shrimping, fishing families that had baulk nets, you know, static nets that the fish got caught in on the way back. But you tended to stick to your trade. My dad, we did go cockling, didn't we?

J Yeah.

B Which wasn't a lot of fun. You're jumping up and down on the sand until they popped up, and then trying to grab 'em if they went back down again. And then I consider that was a... no, it sounds ungrateful, but I consider that was a bit of a waste of space because I didn't like 'em once I got 'em. I didn't care if they went back in.

Because now, when, you know, if you look, if you think about it, Morecambe is more famous for shrimping and areas of the Bay like Flookburgh is more famous for cockling.

B Mm.

But I heard that cockling and musselling was just as lucrative in Morecambe at one stage.

B Oh, it was massive.

J Yeah.

B It was massive!

J Yes.

B If you see old pictures. I haven't got any at home, because we weren't cockling and musselling families. But Kiln Brow, you'd get photographs of Kiln Brow (ph) with sacks and sacks and sacks of mussels and cockles.

J Mm.

So when was this then, what kind of... ?

B In the... well, early part of the century. That would probably fade out 30s, 40s, would it? Something like that. I don't remember 'em when I was a kid.

J I don't remember them.

B So it must have been the 30s and 40s when that finished. But I've seen pictures.

J You probably...

B Off Kiln Brow, which is at the... the yacht club landing now, where they were literally sacks and sacks of 'em, weren't they? Tremendous amount. Because they would go out onto the skears and they would walk out and scrape them off. Or go with the jumbo and rock the cockles up. That was physically hard work as well. And they'd take perhaps a horse and cart out, to put the sacks on to bring them back.

And can you remember the names of any of the families then that were doing the

cockling and musselling?

B I can't, because all the fishing families we knew tended to be shrimpers.

J You tended to get people around the Bay, like here in Bolton-le-Sands, who were probably small town farmers, but they would...

B They would do cockling and musselling on the side.

J They would do cockling and musselling on the side.

B But you didn't get many shrimpers doing it. Unless, as Jean said, perhaps for our own consumption.

J Mm.

B Because it's a different trade, you see. With the mussels, you've got to go and physically scrape them off the rocks, physically drag 'em off. And with cockles you've to physically go out with a jumbo, rock it on the sand, bring the cockles up, scrape them from the surface and bring them ashore.

And they still do quite a bit of cockling round sort of Hest Bank and...

J No. They've closed the cockle beds.

They have?

B Well, they got in such a mess, didn't they, when they were over-fished with all those... you know, when the Chinese died.

Mm.

B There was such a lot of over-fishing. They were... well, they were cleaning the Bay out, weren't they?

J Mm.

B End of story. They were literally clearing the Bay out, all these people coming to make a quick buck.

So do you know any areas round here then that do cockling still?

B I don't know whether they still do a bit off Morecambe or not. But they did close the beds so they could recover, didn't they?

J Mm. The Northwest... well, I'm not quite sure what they call them anymore but it always used to be North-western Sea Fisheries, but they put notices up saying the cockle beds were closed. And they keep renewing them. They're still closed. I think people come down from...

B I think there are the odd cocklers around the Bay, aren't there, in various points?

J Yeah.

B I think I've heard there are a few families still doing a bit. But all these incomers, you know... well, bringing foreign slaves in, basically. There's no other way of putting it. And they were just taking everything, weren't they, from, you know, any size, they didn't care what they were, they were just scraping it clean. And once with mussells, I think I've bought... I think it was from either Holland or Denmark, that came up. I think that was in the 70s. And you could hear it scraping everything off the rocks and the seabed.

J I think from the point of view of what's going on now, you'd probably be other side of

the Bay, you see, because Furness Foods down there...

Mm-hm. Furness Game and Poultry Supplies I think it's called.

J Yes, and... But they do shrimps and things, don't they? And I think, because quite a lot of people go out with tractors from that side.

B Mind you, we always said, didn't we? They taste different from the other side of the Bay, don't they?

J Mm.

In what way?

B Well, I'm biased. I've a horrible suspicion they might boil them in fresh water. I might be wrong. But they don't taste the same.

J But that's where...

B They've a lot less flavour.

J I mean, going round there, that's with the tractors.

B Oh, yeah. There's no boats.

J There'll be a lot more going on over there, I think.

B But er... if they came from that side of the Bay, they definitely tasted different to the ones that came on the Morecambe side of the Bay. And I think it was the way we processed them that made the difference. Because they would go out and catch them and then they would bring them ashore. And everything was done ashore with them.

Where with us everything was done on the boat.

This is shrimping?

B Yeah, out at sea.

Ah. 'Cause I, yes, I've spoken to somebody on the Flookburgh side and it was always, "We boiled the shrimps at home," that's why I asked you about... boiling was done on the boats.

B As I say, they taste different. They definitely taste different.

J I think traditionally, it was horses and carts things from that side. And erm...

B We did have horses and carts here, didn't we? As well. Particularly more up this way.

J At Wild Duck Hall end, yeah.

B Yeah. They also had horses and carts up this way

Where was that, sorry?

J Just the bottom of the village on the... If you... when you get to the end of the village, there's... if you went straight down to the shore from there, that's... there's a big house called Wild Duck Hall, that area was an access point to the...

B There was a few Bolton-le-Sands families fished down that way, didn't they?

J Yes, Burrows and people did, didn't they?

B But they were horse and cart people.

J Mm.

B They didn't have boats.

Can you remember the names of the families?

J Certainly some Burrows went.

Burrows?

J Burrows.

B-U-R-R-O-W?

J Yeah. And...

B I didn't know many of them. The only reason I remember Burrows is 'cause (inaud) played goalkeeper for my dad.

J What did I do with... oh, I sent it to Marilyn, that... Sorry, this is me trying to remember something. There was a... it was a picture Auntie Edna had, and it was somebody in the Long side of the family.

B Mm, I don't know much about that.

J Because when Auntie Edna died, I sent it to Marilyn. I thought it would be something she would like to have. And I can't think of the name of the chap.

B There again, they had farms as well, didn't they?

J Oh, yeah, mm.

B They tended to be both. 'Cause round where I am, the old families there, some of the fishing families, the ones who came out with more money also tended to have a little bit of land. There was a few families owned little landholdings that they could grow all sorts of things on. They were the ones who came out more successful, 'cause they'd a backup plan.

J Yeah.

B It wasn't just the shrimps. And they tended to buy... they tended to buy property and rent it out. So they had like two trades, if you will.

J Mm.

And you'd mentioned, you mentioned last time about, you know, finances, and being up and down in terms of the quality of the catch or how much was caught from year to year, and it differed tremendously.

B Oh, yeah. I mean, once or twice they got really, really bad years, where my dad hardly got anything. But people didn't seem to under... I don't know how they managed actually. I suppose with Mummy doing a bit at the Trawlers or... yeah, I don't know how they survived really. Because you couldn't go and sign on. Like now, if you lose your job, you go to the job centre and say "I'm out of work" and they say "Right, a few weeks later you'll get X, Y, Z." You couldn't do that. But erm... I don't know. I don't know how they survived.

You did say sometimes they...

B Taking people in sometimes, in summer.

Yeah. Bed and breakfast and...

J And I think people... I mean, they did borrow from the bank, people. Get an overdraft.

B Yeah. They'd have odd little jobs here and there, wouldn't they?

J Yeah, yeah. Mm.

B But there wasn't a great deal, really. I suppose it... well, you grin and bear it, don't you? And hope you can pay the bills back when you've got the money. But I suppose I... I don't remember my dad having much of a bank account ever. He certainly didn't have one when he died. The only bank account he had was in the Post Office.

J They did have an account at the District Bank, yeah.

B Yeah, but at the end, I don't...

J But then, no, I'm not sure what happened then.

B Because they didn't have a pension system or anything like that, you see. So when my dad retired, they would literally be living off the state pension. They wouldn't have any other income, would they?

J No, no.

And you said that sometimes they would possibly do a bit of farming as, to substitute it?

B Some families. Ours didn't.

J No.

B Nobody in our family had anything to do with that. The pleasure boats were the only outlet, weren't they, that would bring money in? It was only the pleasure boats in summer.

J Mm.

And that was taking people out on the boats during the tourist season?

B Yeah.

J Yeah. Mm.

B Yeah. There was half a dozen boats all painted blue and white. Well, white with blue trims. Erm, Primrose, Gowan Lea, Roses, Brutus (ph). What were the others?

J Mussrose (ph).

B Mussrose (ph), yeah. Mauritania, she was a little shrimp boat, wasn't she?

J But the ones they sailed, there was Mauritania and Shamrock and Daffodil and Princess May.

B Yeah. They were shrimp boats. And then they got together and they formed these proper little pleasure boats, you know, proper little shaped pleasure boats that could carry more people. The Gowan Lea was one of the bigger ones, wasn't she? And the Roses was quite big. And Brutus was literally what her name was, wasn't she? She was an ugly bloody thing, wasn't it, really, Brutus?

J Mm.

B But erm...

Did they get any money for the cross-bay swim, their contributions to that?

B Now, I think they must've had something. They must've been given a nominal fee, I'm sure. They'd have to pay the rowers.

J Yeah.

B Because it's a long way to row across the bay.

Can you explain to me what it was, the cross-bay swim, and the involvement of your dad and other fishermen?

B Well, that was swimming roughly, basically, Grange to Morecambe. But you couldn't swim in a straight line because of the tidal movement. Basically when you would swim in the Bay, the idea of coming across that was when you got to this side, to the finish, the tide would be ebbing out the Bay and it would bring you down. So you'd have an easier swim down to the end. And it usually finished round about the Stone Jetty.

But they would have rowers. They'd get in the water at Grange, and they'd all have their little individual boats that rowed them across. They stayed with that boat all the way across. But of course, as I say, you had to come down, you'd to weave. Because of sand banks and channels and tidal movements, you couldn't just get in at Grange and look at Morecambe and think, "Right, I'm over there." It did move a little bit. But you stuck with your own little row boat.

And my dad, I mean, at the beginning when he was younger, he was a rower, wasn't he?

J Mm.

B He would row across the Bay. But when we were growing up, my dad getting older, he would go with the Sir William Priestley Lifeboat. And their job was basically to keep an eye on everybody. If somebody got into difficulty and couldn't swim any further, or was sick for some reason, they would put them on the lifeboat and they... the what would you call it? What was the name when they had them... they didn't call it a lifeboat, even though it was. There was a name for it. But that was the boat that would go round and collect all the people who had problems.

J Mm.

B And look after them, and then bring them to Morecambe. But most people got across alright, didn't they?

J Yes, mm.

B But as I say, you stayed with your own little row boat all the way across.

J The advantage you had with having rowers who had, either were fishermen or fished, was you could have an idea how the tide was formed, and you could take advantage. The dive-in at Grange would be around high-water, and you could follow, so you could pick up favourable tidal flows on the way across.

B Most of them made it. I mean, because you'd to be very careful. If you got onto a sandbank, you were snookered, because if you stood up and took one step, you were disqualified. I have a strong suspicion some of them pulled themselves across those sandbanks without actually coming out the water. You know, they'd crawl across to get into the channels at the other side. That was if you weren't a fast swimmer. Because you'd to be pretty quick, hadn't you, to come across the Bay?

J Yeah, well, the record was 2 hours, 2 minutes.

B Yeah. I don't think that got beaten from the early part of the century, did it?

J No. It must have been...

B Must have been a particularly good tide to swim on.

J Yeah.

B But there were some good... I mean, well, there's a statue to him now, isn't there?
Commander Forsberg.

J Yes.

B Down at the Battery. I mean, he was one of the best long distance swimmers in the country, he was amazing.

J Mm.

B Such a nice man. And he did the cross-bay a few times.

And did women take part in it?

B Oh, yeah. Yeah.

J Mm.

B One in particular, Dorothy Perkins. Er... she... I think, was she Bradford, Dorothy?
She was a right big girl, ever so nice. She won the cross-bay a few times, and she went down to swim the channel.

J Yes.

B Because she was on course to do a really good time in the channel, and the boat, her support boat, broke down, and she had to swim round it for ages.

J But she was erm...

B So that spoilt the chance at the channel record.

J She was a great long-distance swimmer, wasn't she?

B She was brilliant.

J Yes.

B Because I remember her saying, she said, "Eeh, if Mr Woodhouse had been here, this wouldn't have happened" (laughs). Because of course she'd just to swim round and round and round like a seal, really, until they got it going again. And so it wrecked her hopes of breaking the channel record. Because I remember once going in with her, and my dad helped her train. And I remember once going in with her off the central pier area. And how the hell this girl does this? It'd kill me.

J Mm.

B She was phenomenal. She'd just keep going and keep going and keep going.

J Mm.

B She was round about the same time as Frankie Taylor won the middle-weight championship. He was from Lancaster. And she was round about the same time, because they all went to the town hall for a presentation.

J Mm. But erm... it was quite a big thing, really, the cross-bay swim, in its day. Mm.

B Oh, yeah, it was. A lot of people went to watch the end of the cross-bay swim. And they had the in-shore swim as well, didn't they, which was close to Morecambe, closer to Morecambe Promenade. That was a shorter swim, a sort of up and downy, wasn't it?

J Mm.

And did you ever take part, Barbara? Because you've mentioned you really enjoyed swimming.

B No, my father tried that. "I've watched you," he said. "You'd make a decent Bay swimmer."

"In your dreams! I'm not swimming that" (J laughs). "No. I was more into a swimming pool, breaststroke, backstroke, thank you very much." No desire to hurl myself across Morecambe Bay, 11 miles, thank you, no, I don't think so" (laughs).

Shall we have a little break?

B Good idea.

Track 4

So I've heard that Dick Woodhouse's nickname was Number 1. Have you heard that before?

B Well, I'm not saying it wasn't, but the only name I heard my dad called regular was Chocolate Kid.

J Mm.

B Because he always had a chocolate in his pocket.

(laughs)

J Yes.

B He was very fond of chocolate, wasn't he?

J Yes, he was.

B Very fond of sweets.

J I've never heard Number 1.

I can't remember who said, but I mentioned Dick Woodhouse, and somebody said, "Oh, yes, he was Number 1. We all used to call him Number 1."

B No, I'll tell you who's said that. Charlie Overett's said that, more than likely.

J The other thing was that the boat...

B Because he thought the world of my dad.

J The boat registration was LR1.

B Registration was LR1.

Right.

B Yes, he got the registration LR1. He had it on Mascot and he had it on Kelpie, didn't he?

J Yes.

B But he got... I know they called him the Chocolate Kid, and it was Old Dick and Young Dick, wasn't it?

J Yeah.

B There was all sorts of weird and wonderful names, wasn't there, for people? I'll never understand half of them.

Can you remember some of them?

B Gosh. I can't off the top of my head. There'll be in my dad's books at home, won't they?

J Mm.

B Because he kept a logbook, he wrote in it every day. And he'd write quite often the names, you know, the nicknames. I'm trying to think that one who was always drunk and always going down the back of Oxford Street drunk. Old Bloney.

J Bloney, yes.

B He was a Baxter, wasn't he?

J Mm, yes.

B And...

Bloney or Baloney?

B Bloney. B-L-O-N-E-Y. I don't know why they called him Old Bloney.

J No.

B But there was all sorts of wonderful names, wasn't there?

J Mm. I'd have to look in my dad's book. They all had very odd names. But they... my dad, I only ever remember people calling him The Chocolate Kid. And the young... the young ones that were training with him, they might call him Skipper and things like that, but I don't ever remember them calling him anything else.

B No. No, I don't either.

It seems like he was incredibly influential when he was around.

B Oh, he was. Yes.

How do you think he got that reputation then?

B Well, I honestly think... Number one, he was great at communicating, wasn't he?

J Yes, he was.

B He left school very young, with not much education, but through his lifetime... this is probably where I got it from, hating school... but through his lifetime he got interested in things. And he was really quite a well-read man, wasn't he?

J Mm.

B He read a lot, he learned a lot, you know. I mean, he knew the Bay as well if not

better than most people. But he also had other interests, and he... he could talk about nearly anything. He was a good dancer.

J Mm.

B Wasn't he?

J Yes.

B Good footballer. He played for Morecambe. So he'd a lot of general interests. And he was very, very good at sharing them with people. If anybody wanted to learn to fish, or to learn to do something, he was quite prepared to take them on board and help them with it.

You've mentioned he taught quite a number of people in the area to fish. One of them was Ray Edmondson.

B Yes.

Who was the others that he taught?

B Well, Ernie went, Ernie Nicholson went with him a lot. The Green (ph) brothers went with him, didn't they?

J Mm.

B But one of those, sadly, he got drowned off... when he was out fishing on his own boat. Erm... now, that did upset my dad when that lad drowned.

J Yes.

B 'Cause he'd taught him to fish and then he drowned in the Bay. That's very sad, that.

Did you remember that incident?

B I remember the incident. I just remember my father being upset, because he'd actually had something to do with him. But I mean, a few fishermen over the years had died, hadn't they?

J Mm.

B So... It was like when my dad was lifeboat... we had... stupid things you remember. They gave us... 'cause the house was just a basic house, wasn't it? There was nothing posh in the house. But they gave us a phone, didn't they?

J Mm.

B A black bakelite 1940s, 50s phone. Number 2796. I've never forgotten that phone number. The only reason they gave us it was so that the police could get in touch with us if they needed the lifeboat. They would ring us. And then you would physically go and get crew, wouldn't you?

J Mm.

B Knock on doors and physically go and get crew for the lifeboat.

But what I was thinking about, with the young Green lad dying and things, was the number of times my dad would go if it was an accident with people, couldn't find them, couldn't get them, and then he'd say, "Well, I'll go in..." one, two, three days, whatever. "I know where they'll be."

J Mm.

B And he'd a good idea where they'd wash up or get stuck on the Bay.

J Mm.

B And he could go and retrieve them later. He was very good at working out where the bodies would go.

The accidents, were they mostly related to the weather or... ?

B No, not always. I mean, you could... well, get your leg caught, your boot caught in a net, couldn't you?

J Yeah.

B When you were throwing your nets over, if you got your boot caught, you went with it. And as they got more mechanical with the engines and capstans and things, they had the odd accident, didn't they?

J Mm.

B But it was mainly going over the side.

J But when you think about it, surprisingly few, really.

B Well, 'cause they knew what they were doing, didn't they?

J Mm.

B It was pure fluke if you got dragged over, 'cause they did know what they were doing.

J Mm.

And what was your dad's role then in the Morecambe Lifeboats?

B Well, he ended up... he was a crew member for a while, wasn't he? And then he ended up running it. He was what you'd be a Coxswain now. Coxswain of the lifeboat. And he was in charge of keeping them in good condition, making sure her ropes were in good order, her engine was up to date, she was fit and seaworthy, you know. He'd paint her regularly and red lead her regularly so that she was completely seaworthy. And he was the one they got in touch with when the first shout came and the first call-out came. He'd go down and get her ready. And erm... they had a trapdoor on the central pier, about halfway down the central pier, to get to her, because that's where she was moored, up against the pier. And obviously when the tide's in, you can't walk to her. So they had a trapdoor in the central pier. Morrell let them have it, didn't he? He ran the central pier.

J Mm.

B They put a trapdoor in and steps down. And then the iron landing area, where they could get to her and pull her in and get on her. So you could get on her underneath the central pier. Your crew could get on.

But he was responsible for keeping her in good nick and... well, basically he would do a lot of the steering.

J Mm.

B And knew where he was going, didn't he? And then some of the younger lads would probably do the physical work, like if it was getting onto a boat... pulling another boat to safety.

And was that a role he was... was it a voluntary role?

B Oh, yes.

J Yes.

And was he sort of voted on, or how did it... how did he become in charge?

B I don't know. I think it was just progression, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B As one old fisherman left. Like anything, I suppose you worked your way up the ranks. You proved your worth, and people knew you could do the job.

J Mm. I think it probably was as simple as that.

B Because he'd done it from being a young man, on various incidents they'd had. So you'd work your way up. And then, as I say, he would be able to say where, if God forbid, if there was fatalities, he'd be able to say, you know, roughly, "I know where they'll be. If they're still in the Bay, I'll find them at..." X, Y, Z, and he could go and bring them back. 'Cause erm... he used to use the lifeboat as well for the Morecambe Yacht Club. They used it as a sort of rescue and service boat. Whenever there was a race on, she'd go out, and then if there was a problem... 'cause was it on one of the Yacht Club races somebody died of a heart attack? I think it was a Yacht Club Race. And went into the water. And when they pulled him out, my dad said, "No, he'd definitely gone." I think that was a Yacht Club race.

J I don't remember that at all.

B He pulled somebody out, and he said, "I knew he was dead. As soon as I pulled him

out. But they'd erm... it was general... I mean, a lot of the time it was for people in trouble. But it could easily be for boats just breaking away, and trying to get them before they were too damaged.

And do you remember any sort of incidents or accidents that happened, sort of as impressionable...

B No, not particularly.

J No.

B No, the only one that stays... as I say, the only one that sticks in my mind was losing Mascot.

J Yes.

B I remember standing and watching Mascot break up.

J Mm.

B And I remember my dad being called out in really horrendous weather, and sometimes I would sit there and think, "I wonder if they'll come back."

J Mm.

B But nothing particular. 'Cause they were all... all incidents were different, but usually it was a case of somebody being washed overboard, or somebody swimming out too far or... you know, getting stuck on a sandbank and the boats would have to go. It was that routine sort of stuff. But erm...

I mean, it was a bit difficult when they... when you watched them working on... off the

seawall. That was a bit hairy, 'cause they had to come quite near the seawall really to get the boats.

J Mm.

B And if you made a mistake, I mean, it was you on the seawall as well. But... they always knew what they were doing 'cause they knew how much power they had to have in the engine.

J Mm.

B And how to move the tiller to pull her away. Sometimes the engine'd go a little bit weaker and then a bit stronger, so that they could keep pulling away.

The last time we spoke, you mentioned that, was it your granddad that... a body was found in one of his nets.

B Yes.

What was the story behind that?

B Well, it was just literally a body in the net, when they dragged the net up. Because I remember I think it was my dad saying he went through the pockets on the body, he went through the pockets. And somebody said, "What are you doing that for, Woodhouse?"

He said, "Well, somebody'll want to know who it is."

Because it was decomposing in the net. But he went through the jacket and trouser pockets to see if he could find out who it was. I don't know whether he did find out.

And did you ever find out what had happened to this chap?

B No. I mean, people... well, the Bay's a tragedy waiting to happen, isn't it?

J Mm.

B People walk out too far. They literally kill themselves. They literally walk into the tide. They fall in if they're drunk, I mean... Actually, there was an incident, I remember now, and was there one or two drowned? Some young men in summer, they ran out of... I think it was the Queens' Hotel. I think. Was it the Kings Arms? No, I think it was the Queens'. They ran... They'd been drinking all night. They ran across the promenade, straight down the slipway into the water, presumably having a laugh, midnight swim and all that. And the tide was going out. There was certainly one and maybe two drowned. They got two or three of them, because there was somebody night fishing on the Stone Jetty that caught one of them.

Who rescued them?

B Yeah, but presumably by his fishing lines or something, because... it was somewhere off... just off the Stone Jetty that he was rescued, that lad. But I think it was two that they didn't... they didn't rescue. My dad had to go for them. But that was just lads being silly. Just literally, out of the pub, into the tide. Erm... So... But that was the only one I really remember like that. But you see, the trouble was, once they got into that ebb tide, particularly running down there, once the tide started going out, you got into the current. Once you got into the Stone Jetty, you could hear the water running. It was like a rushing river, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B At the end of the jetty. It went out that fast, you see? So once you got stuck in that, there was... There was... I'm sure it was anglers that saved one of them, I don't know whether they didn't get a boat out to another. 'Cause it wasn't as though the weather was all that bad. It was... well, stupidity and a fast ebbing tide. Erm... it was... I think with

my dad, and also with Paul, 'cause my son was on the Royal National crew... I think what would've upset me would've been losing either of them for stupidity.

J Mm.

B I think if it's a good reason... You know, Paul had a particularly bad call-out when they ended up on the lifeboat calendar that year. That was a particularly bad shout. And he came me and he looked so exhausted. But it was for a good reason.

J Mm.

B I think if they get into difficulties or you lose them for somebody being a prat...

J Mm.

B I would've resented that. But I think most of my dad's calls were... I think most of them were pretty genuine mistakes. People making mistakes.

And were there many deaths in the fishing communities of his fellow men that went out?

B There were... earlier in the century I think there was a few, wasn't there?

J Mm.

B I can't remember them exactly but I remember hearing about them. There was a few, but it was predominantly weather-related, I think, those. The only ones I remember. But there was two or three incidents, wasn't there, early on in the 20th century, where they lost a few.

J Mm.

B But there again, as we say, it's pure bad luck, isn't it? And a lot of it, the weather creeping up on you.

J Mm.

B You can go out on a calm day. When you set off, the sun's rising, it's lovely, you know. And two or three hours later, you've a force six or a force seven or more coming up on you and it gets a bit rough. 'Cause I remember my dad once when I was out with him, he said, "I thought, well, now what? Jenny'll go mad." And he said, "I turned round," and he said, "you was sat there with 'tiller in one hand and a banana in the other." (laughs) I was enjoying myself. But it could change dramatically quickly. It's the same all over the world, isn't it?

J Mm.

B Same with rivers. You think a river looks steady and calm and pretty, and you go three or four foot underneath, it's that cold, the shock kills you.

J Mm.

B Well, it's like anything. You've got to respect it, and if you don't respect it, it'll creep up and get you.

And what about sort of people's health? You know, like, being a fisherman, were there any sort of illnesses or particularly...

B I don't remember any specific illnesses.

J No. No.

B In fact, to be brutally honest, it's perhaps like farming. You're perhaps healthier out there than you are anywhere else. I mean, compare that to a mine or a cotton mill.

J Mm.

B You're in the fresh air all the time. Of course it's hard work, it's heavy work. It's cold work. But if you compare it to other jobs, you know, you're with the elements, you're in the fresh air. With your lifestyle, you're eating fresh food all the time, aren't you?

J Yes.

B Good food. So, I mean, me and Jean, we'd eat shrimps every so often and we'd get like a plate-full like that (mimes) for your tea. I mean, now, God forbid (J laughs). It'd be about 50 or 60 quid in London if not more, wouldn't it? Where do you get that price, you know? Crazy. But erm... so you ate quite well. I mean, as I say, if you look at it, it was a very healthy lifestyle in that respect.

J Mm.

B Because I remember my dad going on the end of the Stone Jetty once. And he said... He'd go for a walk occasionally. And erm... he saw these blokes fishing. "What the bloody hell are you doing down here in this weather?" And one of them said something like, "Ever worked down a mine, mate?" And my dad said, "Enough. Enough said." 'Cause he could understand why they were there. If you worked down in a hole in the earth, it's pretty nice coming, even on a breezy day, at the end of the jetty, you know. But erm... apart from the physical side of it, I would've thought...

J On the whole, they were all pretty fit, really, weren't they?

B Yeah.

You mentioned most of them didn't learn to swim.

B A lot of people who go to sea don't swim. Because if you're resisting and it's futile, it takes you a lot longer to go, doesn't it, when you think about it? I mean, with the fishermen here, you've got to bear in mind, they had, usually... I mean, sometimes they had knee boots... but quite often it was fire boots, big boots up to here (mimes), sweaters, oilskins, waterproof trousers. You know. If you go over in that sort of gear, you don't stand a lot of chance of staying alive.

Very heavy.

J Mm.

B Yeah, 'cause it's gonna... it's gonna... your boots are gonna fill with water for a start. And if you can't kick 'em off, they're gonna pull you. And if you're caught in a net, it's gonna drag you down anyway. Although my granddad could swim.

J Yes.

B He used to go in that pool at the Winter Gardens, didn't he, granddad?

J Yeah.

B But apart from him, I think I was the first member of the family to actually go in a pool and learn to swim properly. Nobody did. None of my dad's... er, my granddad's kids learnt to swim.

J Mm.

And did you know anything about... I heard a story about Amos Willacy getting caught in quicksand.

B Oh, that was when he was going... I think it's the one where he was going down to the boat.

J Mm.

B The Linda, she was called, wasn't she, Amos's boat? Was it Linda?

J I think it was Linda, yes.

B I think it was called... I think Amos's boat was Linda.

J Yes.

B But if it's the one I remember my dad telling me about, that's when he was either going down or coming back from his boat. And even though they all knew what they were doing, they could spot quicksand a mile off, really... but for some reason, it had formed somewhere in the pier area, and Amos was walking up, and before he realised it, it sucked him down. I think they had to pull him out of his boots, if I remember rightly.

J He spread his oilskin out.

B Was that it?

J And stayed flat on top of it and then shouted, yeah.

B But that was actually near his boat, I mean, it wasn't... it wasn't going anywhere strange, it was actually where the boats were moored, wasn't it?

J Yeah.

B He was only going to or from his boat. So it was pure bad luck that there was some sort of quicksand gathering there, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B I mean, they'd always say be careful where you walked. Because sometimes it had a funny colour, didn't it?

J Mm.

B It went like a funny sort of greeny brown on top, didn't it?

Quicksand did?

B Yeah.

J Mm.

B Some of it. I mean, you couldn't always tell, by all means, but otherwise people wouldn't get stuck. But it would... you'd get this funny mottled colour on it sometimes. You could... I mean we used... when you think about it, we used to do it for fun, paddle and paddle and paddle and see how far down you went. If you got to about here (mimes) you'd start panicking, wondering if you could get your feet out.

Up to your knees?

B Yeah. And then it was, "Gone too far, gone too far" (laughs).

I mean, it's a bit of a sombre question, I hope you don't mind me asking it, but I was thinking about sort of funerals and big fishermen families and whether there was any particular traditions that would be... you know how you mentioned about

the fishermen's choir? I know that quite a long time ago...

B Well, I dare say they would use the fishermen's choir, but they were predominantly just big Methodist funerals, weren't they?

J Mm, yeah.

B They'd be probably, usually at Green Street or Clarence Street.

J Mm.

B You'd get the odd one at the Holy Trinity but the majority of fishermen tended to be of the Methodist faith or brought up with the Methodist faith. Because we even had my dad's there, didn't we? We had my dad at Green Street.

J Yes.

B Even though he hadn't been in there since Adam was a lad sort of thing. But we had his funeral there.

J Mm.

B It was a really full church, wasn't it?

J Mm.

B Because of course my dad had been involved in shrimp fishing, teaching people to fish, sea cadets, cross-bay swim, inshore swim, pleasure boats, football. You know. He'd been involved in so many different things. Oh, and then towards the end of his life, when they were building the power station...

J Mm.

B They came for... you know, advice about the Bay, when they were building the power station. Water outlets and things like that.

J Mm.

B So he was involved in quite a lot of things. He got friendly with quite a few of the MPs, didn't he?

J Mm. We had... they were fishermen's choir hymns I think we had at the Green Street. Yeah.

B But they'd all be much of a muchness, wouldn't they, if I remember rightly.

J Mm.

B It was just a sort of traditional Methodist funeral.

And what did he do with the Sea Cadets?

B He was what they called a Boats Officer. It was a civilian job, but it was literally teaching seamanship, really. Knots and compasses and... anything to do with going out in the Bay, sailing. And we had, as I say, we had this whaler. And he would take them out and teach them to row and things like that.

J Mm.

B But he did that voluntarily, didn't he?

J Mm.

It's nice that he felt that he wanted to give those things back.

B Well, he did, and the thing was... well, let's face it, he loved the Bay, didn't he?

J Mm.

B End of story. He just absolutely loved being on the Bay. He loved his Bay, he loved his football. Of course, when the grandkids came along, he loved having the grandkids. He took fishing parties out, didn't he? And sometimes they'd pay him, and sometimes it would be friends. He'd take us out for pleasure.

J Mm.

B He might go out trawling and say, "Oh, it's a beautiful day, should we go out for an hour or two and just take us on the Bay?"

J Mm.

B He just loved it, didn't he? Absolutely loved it. Couldn't get him off. It wasn't... I mean, he was physically ill before he came off the Bay, wasn't he? Because I know, was it Tom Fortner (ph) with him when he said he was coughing up blood or something that had upset Tom? But erm... he was ill before he actually finished going on the Bay.

But his illness wasn't related to...

B No, it was cancer.

Right. Mm.

B But he just basically loved the Bay. As I say. Our lives... it was the Bay and football,

predominantly, wasn't it? I mean, Morecambe and Blackpool FC, we used to go every other Saturday to Blackpool.

And when you look back, have you got any distinctive or really happy memories of him and the things you used to do together or...

B Well, for me it was purely going on the Bay. If he let me, you know, the night before, said, "It's gonna be a nice morning, lass, now, do you want to come?" All your Christmases had come at once if you were going with your dad.

J Mm.

B 'Cause such an experience. Can you imagine going out with your dad on a boat on a beautiful morning, just you, your dad and any wildlife round you?

J Mm.

B It don't come much better than that, does it?

And getting me up in the early hours to listen to the... what he called horizontal heavyweights.

J Mm.

B The first one I got up to listen to was in the early 50s, Bruce Woodcock.

J Yes.

B Got me up to listen to that about two or three o'clock in the morning. The fight. I think it was in Madison Square Gardens, that. And as I say, the football, going to the football with him and my mam. Because he had a footballer down in Morecambe, he was

following Morecambe for a while, he had a footballer called Ray Charnley. And he went to play for Blackpool FC, so he followed him, and he played a couple of times for England, didn't he?

J Mm.

B So... we always kept an interest in football.

What about you, Jean? Have you got any distinctive memories?

J No. I think, from my point of view, you see, we were living here when I was little. It was also the war. So it was a very different sort of time. So I tended to be with my mum more, because my dad was on the tanker pier when they were building the tanker pier.

B Fire service.

J And things like that. So erm... yeah, it was a different sort of time. So I never really went on the boat until we actually moved to Morecambe. Erm, so that would be more... what would we do then? Oh, I suppose it's going round to football matches with Bolton-le-Sands then.

B Yes.

J And er... yeah.

B What is it, "Cigarettes and whiskey and wild, wild women", on the coach?

What's that?

B He used to sing a song. 'Cigarettes, whiskey and wild, wild women. Drive me crazy, drive me insane.' That was when he had the northwest Lancashire lads, wasn't it?

J Yeah.

And you mentioned he played a part in advising when they were building Heysham Power Station. What was that about?

B Well, they had to have... whenever they build anything like that anywhere, they need local information. So you need somebody who knows the Bay really. It was predominantly for their outlet pipes and things, to make sure they were going to be either permanently underwater or...

J Yes.

B Out of water when they needed to be. It was just looking for information from somebody who knew the Bay building these various... I think it was predominantly outlet pipes.

J Mm.

B I don't understand nuclear power, but that was why he was called in. But erm... because he said once, he'd gone to one meeting and they said this, that and the other, and he said something like, "And what are you going to do when the tide's out?" "Well, we'll do so and so." He said, "No, you won't, because there won't be any, the water'll have gone."

J Mm.

B And dad said that's why we used people like that, because they knew. They might have a design idea, but then somebody comes along and says, "What're you gonna do when the tide's gone out?" And that's why they're asked... they ask local... and I presume they do it all round the country.

J Mm.

B They'll have done it at Sellafield and Dungeness and all these different places, won't they? Erm... asking local fishermen, local farmers or whoever that know the area really well.

And from all his experience then, did he see any changes?

B Well, I would've thought the main thing I remember him commenting on is losing the fishing fleet.

J Yeah. Mm.

B Because there was so much more ashore for young men. I mean really, when you think about it, in my dad's generation, the beginning of the 20th century, I don't know whether there was really in Morecambe that much more to do. I mean, they had businesses and hotels, obviously, but there wasn't a wealth of factories and things, was there?

J No.

B The factories tended to be in Lancaster.

J Mm.

B Because places like ICI didn't grow up until the wartime, did they?

J Mm.

B Erm... Trimpell ICI and things like that. There was only really the harbour. So there

wasn't a great deal that they could do. And then of course as time went on, factories were built, the power station became going and... well, there was so much people could get involved with. Driving buses, driving trucks. Easier access to factories. So your fisherman went because the money wasn't guaranteed and it was bloody hard work. So I would imagine that was the biggest difference he saw.

J Mm.

I think I remember reading in part of his logbook as well, he made a comment about a lot of the legislation changes – this is probably once he'd retired – and how that had an impact on...

B Well, that would probably be something like Northwest Sea Fisheries or something, because they... well, it's like now, there's so much: things you can bring ashore, things you can't bring ashore, the way you fish. I mean, everything's legislated now. Where you used to go out, catch your fish and then bring 'em ashore, and they used their own common sense. A little fish, you don't bring it. Tiny shrimps, you don't bring 'em. They're your next harvest. If you get a big fish - big skate, big plaice - fetch it home, sell it, eat it, whatever.

But now, I mean, well, it's obscene what the European Union's done with fishing. It's absolutely obscene. I mean, they're forced to throw dead fish over the side for Christ's sake (J Mm). I mean, why can't they bring it ashore, even if it's only for fertiliser or pet food? It's already dead! It's pointless.

And of course that was beginning to creep in. Where of course they never had that you see. You used your common sense.

You didn't bring very small stuff ashore because it was... well, you were defeating your own object. Wrecking your own job. And if they'd let fishermen do that. Good fishermen knew how to organise themselves, didn't they? (J Mm). What they could bring and what

they couldn't. Reliable, good fishermen wouldn't've swept the seas as clean as that.

I remember towards the end of his, one of his biggest bugbears, and my goodness he carried on – factory ships.

J Oh!

B He went on about factory ships.

He said to me once, "I might not live to see it lass, but you will. They're gonna sweep these seas clean," and my word they damn nearly did (J Mm). Big Russian factory ships and of course Japanese. But the Russians were up north (J Mm). And they were taking *everything* out of the water. *Everything*. And the cod well it's only just recovering now isn't it? (J Mm). All these years on. Terrifying what they did.

'Cause when the Icelandic cod wars were on. You tended to think the Icelandics were being a bit over-the-top. But if you look at it now they were very sensible, they were protecting their own. Weren't they? (J Mm)

I mean it was a bit heavy handed, suddenly (inaud) trawler but they could see what was gonna happen.

I mean in your... both your lifetimes you must've seen an incredible change to the fishing industry and...

B Oh yeah. Very much. Well like the boats coming out of Fleetwood.

J Mm.

B Dozens of boats at Fleetwood weren't there? Going up north and up the Minches and up towards Iceland and up there. They've nearly all gone now if not all of them (J Mm).

There's nobody left. But as we say it's a hard life, you've gotta want to do it. There's a new programme on television Paul said was very good last night about trawler men. It's on BBC2 I think, I missed it, but that's about lads going out on four and five man trawlers (J Mm). But you've got to want to do it. 'Cause if you don't get a good, I mean it was bad enough here but if you went up on a Fleetwood boat and you went all the way to Iceland and there was nothing there or the weather was so bad you couldn't put your nets out, you'd no wage when you came back had you because you'd, what you caught was your wage.

When you brought it ashore and they put it onto the fish docks, that was your wages 'cause you got a percentage of the boat's intake. Sometimes they'd come back with next to nothing, people just won't do that now and as my dad said you can't blame 'em (J Mm).

Looking back you know as the two daughters of Dick Woodhouse, you must be incredibly proud of what your dad achieved around the Bay.

B Oh yeah.

J Mm!

B Aren't we (J Yes!), without a shadow of a doubt (J Mm). He was an incredible person. And in general, I had my ups and downs, I was a horrendous teenager, I had thumping rows. But once I got out of that rebellious streak, I don't ever remember anything about my mum and my dad that I didn't like to be honest.

J No, I don't!

B I don't, I can't remember, I mean obviously in my teens yeah. Very arrogant self-possessed little sod I was. But I don't remember anything untoward about my parents at all.

Is there anything else that you'd like to share or any memories that you have that you want to part?

J Oh I don't know whether there is really.

B They were just, they were just lovely people.

J Yeah. I think that's just about it really.

B I mean they gave us a balanced lifestyle.

J We had a nice time, didn't we?

B As I say, we had the Bay, we had... well, Jean didn't do it as much because she was older than me but I was brought up on a load of football fields and when we went to Blackpool that's how I became a Blackpool football fan (J Mm). Because it was so busy, and the ball came into the paddock and I picked it up and gave it back and the bloke said, he said something like "Can I have the ball back love?" and I gave it to him and he ran away and my dad said, "You know who that was don't you?" I said, "Not really." "The Great Matthews," he said. And that was me, Blackpool. I remember that sticking in my mind. But erm they were just nice balanced people.

J Mm, yeah.

B Because we got, we used to go to the cinema on a regular basis with them didn't we?

J Mm. And the Winter Gardens.

B And the Winter Gardens. And the Starlights.

J Yeah.

B We always went to the Starlights at the end of the pier didn't we?

J Mm. And we had a collection, we had a week every summer at the Starlights where we were allowed to go and collect for the local lifeboat, not the RNLI, the *local* one. We used to go 7 nights a week didn't we? (J Mm) and collect on the end of the Pier for the lifeboat.

It strikes me that he seemed to manage to achieve to be a fisherman *and* a family man, which I imagine was really quite difficult.

B Well I think my mother bore the brunt of the family running didn't she without a shadow of a doubt.

J Mm! Yeah.

B She didn't have it that easy. But on the other hand, compared to what *some* of the men could be like, Dad was a lot more easy-going.

J Mm.

B He wasn't a really vicious patriarch was he?

J No not at all.

B He would talk about anything and he, he learned so much didn't he? (J Mm) He read a *tremendous* amount of books. I remember things like Kontiki (J Mm) and Alcoa Alcoa (ph) (J Mm), books like that, learning about Thor Heyerdahl and that type of thing. Erm... anything he was really interested in. But... because they were both what you'd call, well compared to somebody like me who can explode when really really pushed,

they were quite even tempered and very tolerant, weren't they?

J I think so, mm.

B Tolerant of nearly everything. It was very rare that something really rattled. When I think about it. No they... we were lucky, we were really lucky 'cause I think some of them, some of the old fishermen could be a bit hardnosed couldn't they and a bit difficult. 'Cause Granddad wasn't all that perfect was he, he could be a bit of an old sod. But my dad was a much more reasonable man I think. Not to say my mum didn't have her ups and downs occasionally. For good reason. But in general it was nice. It was a happy life wasn't it?

J Yes it was yeah.

B I don't remember thinking I'm gonna pack my bag and leave home (J laughs).

Thank you. That's lovely.