

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

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

**TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY**

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INTERVIEW NO: H2H2016.16  
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Peter Gaukroger  
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1944  
INTERVIEWER/S: Jenn Mattinson  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 19.2.2016  
LOCATION: Kendal  
SUMMARISER: Sue Bradshaw

<b>TRACK 1</b>	
00.00 – 00.25	Name, DOB, born in Fulwood.
00.25 – 02.18	Family details. Mother Marjorie from Hest Bank, ran Cross Keys at Slyne. Father Albert, commercial traveller from Birmingham area.
02.18 – 03.30	Grandparent's details. Paternal side from Halifax area – didn't really know them. Grandfather Frederick Chamberlain, Grandmother Florence.
03.30 – 05.00	Early life in Bare, moved to Hest Bank aged about 11. Joined Sea Scouts in Morecambe, then Sea Cadets. Shooting rabbits and making rafts on the canal as a boy.
05.00 – 05.58	Sea Cadets motor launch run by Dick Woodhouse. Fishing trips on his own boat to Walney Island.
05.58 – 07.30	Description of mackerel spinning. Problem selling them as no-one wanted to eat them.
07.30 – 08.45	Places to catch mackerel. Sewage outflow at Walney. Description of fishing technique used.
08.45 – 10.00	Description of prawner boats used in Morecambe.
10.00 – 10.10	Own boat "The Volunteer"
10.10 – 12.06	Description of Dick Woodhouse's character and appearance, a leading character in Morecambe. On Morecambe Trawlers committee with the Baxters.
12.06 – 13.09	Description of catching eels at Hest Bank in streams using sacksful of straw and rotten meat. Hanging home-made prawn pots off central pier.
13.09 – 13.38	Meeting Dennis Aldren whose father Jack had a fresh fish shop in Grafton Place and a fishing baulk at Heysham.
13.38 – 15.39	Description of fishing baulk, funnel shaped wicker trap. Some posts may still be visible near Sandylands Prom. Fishing for shrimps on Dennis's boat. Book called "Fishing Methods of England and Wales" has good description of fishing baulks.
15.39 – 17.24	Talk about Dennis Aldren and other father and son fishing pairs. Willacy families.

17.24 – 19.07	Further description of where he did eel fishing, aged 12 – 13. Grandmother made jellied eels.
19.07 – 20.44	Discussion about Sam Baxter who ran Morecambe Trawlers wet fish shop. Macfisheries in Lancaster and other wet fish shops in the bay area.
20.44 – 22.43	Making prawn pots and catching prawns. Description of push netting prawns off Hest Bank and night lines for flounders.
22.43 – 24.55	Differences between flukes, flounders and plaice. Areas for fishing for plaice in the UK. Most flukes in the bay caught on the Grange side using fixed nets.
24.55 – 26.30	Description of shrimp fishing with Dennis Aldren for a couple of winters. Carrying fuel for the boiler down to the boat, early morning trips in the dark.
26.30 – 28.47	Description of mussel raking at Heysham. Mussels had to be sent for purification (location uncertain, maybe Conwy) as caught near sewer outlet. Talk about purification process.
28.47 – 30.00	Sites of mussel beds around the bay. "South America" so-called because far out and needed big tides to access it.
30.00 – 30.55	Sites of cockle beds. Types of fishing done by Flookburgh fishermen. Fished River Kent for salmon by hand.
30.55 – 31.48	Talk about what it was like to go musseling near a sewer outlet.
31.48 – 33.12	Description of process of catching mussels using a rake and sieve, packing into hessian bags.
33.12 – 34.55	Description of fishermen running Morecambe Pleasure boat Company – Benny Woodhouse and the Gerrard brothers.
34.55 – 35.55	They had four boats, Brutus, Gowan Lee, The Roses and Primrose. Billy Holgarth ran a big pleasure boat doing longer trips from the Stone Jetty, the Wyresdale, ex-Knott End ferry.
35.55 – 36.37	Joe Timms ran an ex-Navy patrol boat for pleasure trips from Blackpool North Pier but kept boat harboured at Heysham Harbour.
36.37 – 38.45	Talk about the Woodhouse and Baxter families and where they lived. Bob Baxter, known as "Great Bob" was a skipper of a hopper at Heysham Harbour for the dredging boats.
38.45 – 39.57	List of fishing families in Morecambe, Willacy's, Gerrard's, Dick and Benny Woodhouse, Johnson Raby, Joe Mount, Bill Bailey, Braid's and Burrow's.
39.57 – 41.10	Dennis Aldren did half-net fishing for salmon on River Lune at Snatchems Golden Ball. Description of half-net and other sites in UK where half-nets are used.
41.10 – 44.50	Joined Merchant Navy at age 16 on leaving school. Fishing experiences whilst still at school – talk of that time and rough shrimps/picked shrimps and selling on through various fishing cooperatives.
44.50 – 47.50	Talk of local characters – Benny Woodhouse, Denis Aldren, Dick Woodhouse, Gerrard's, Joe Mount, Willacy's, Sam Baxter.
47.50 – 48.58	Animosity between Morecambe and Overton fishermen. Braid's and Burrow's fighting over salmon fishing spots on River Lune.
48.58 – 51.46	Places for social gatherings and favourite "watering holes" for fishermen – Pier Hotel, pub on Poulton Square (couldn't remember its name), Morecambe Football Club social club on Saturday nights – who went where, who was religious, who was Methodist.
51.46 – 52.58	Fishermen's choir – not involved.
52.58 – 57.33	Talk of brown shrimps and pink shrimps. Techniques for boiling shrimps in salt water or fresh water. Cooling the shrimps on deck or in sea water. Talk of health and safety. Possible effects of pollution from agricultural run-off into the sea.
57.33 – 59.14	Talk of times on the boat in winter, extreme cold. Wearing long fishermen's smocks and thigh boots but no gloves.
59.14 – 60.48	Description of heavy manual work and dangerous nature of being on the boat, manhandling capstans, trawl ropes.
60.48 – 62.38	Talk of summertime on the boat – more enjoyable. Warming tea-can in the boat's boiler. Times of trip from 3 hours to 6 or 7 hours depending on where they went.
62.38 – 64.40	Description of places visited for fishing around the Bay, such as Heysham Lake below Heysham Harbour.
64.40 – 66.40	Morecambe Bay Cross Bay swim. Trawlers would tow rowing boats over from Morecambe to Grange swimming pool. Then rowed back to the Stone Jetty at

	Morecambe with a swimmer following. Talk of piloting Commander Forsberg, the famous English channel swimmer.
66.40 – 68.22	Discussion about fishermen and swimming abilities. Story about Ernie (Nicholson) falling into the sea and nearly drowning.
68.22 – 70.53	Story about the fishermen's "lifeboat" kept under Central Pier accessed through a hatch and spiral stairs. Used to get out to moored boats that were taking on water in rough seas to bail them out. Boat was possibly called Sir John Priestley (not sure of name) and was stored behind Lancaster Maritime Museum awaiting restoration. Does not know if it is still there or if it was restored.
70.53 – 74.41	Getting stung by weever fish. Description of putting fishing catch through a riddle to get rid of smaller fish.
<b>TRACK 2</b>	
00.00 – 03.36	Talk of decision to join Merchant Navy and not go into fishing as a job – better career opportunity, plenty of apprenticeships at that time. Industrial disputes in early 70s affected this, also containerisation as this led to bigger ships but less of them. Before this cargoes were loaded loose into holds of ships. Different types of cargoes from different global locations.
03.36 – 04.30	Joined up as apprentice navigator – had to learn taking star sites as no satellites then.
04.30 – 06.03	Influence of growing up in Morecambe Bay on career choice. Talk of helping on local farms, milking cows, bringing sheep in, but spent more time on sea shore.
06.03 – 08.00	Talk of working for pleasure boat company in summertime from Easter onwards. Boats kept in disused quarry at Overton in winter. In summer moored at long wooden landing stage near present site of Eric Morecambe statue. This ran so far out so that trips could start even at low tide and had to be kept scrubbed clean so people did not slip.
08.00 – 10.02	Description of "wakes" holidays – each Yorkshire/Lancashire town had different weeks off from Easter to end of August. Came to Morecambe on train, talk of different stations at that time, Euston Road and Promenade stations. Description of railway line into Yorkshire.
10.02 – 11.05	Description of job for pleasure boats, boss bringing jug of "frothy coffee" for workers from Smith's cafe at start of day.
11.05 – 11.45	Other fishermen would trawl for flat fish or catch shrimp during the summer months.
11.45 – 13.25	Became fisheries officer in 1970s after leaving the Merchant Navy. Description of career ladder in the Navy – slow progression.
13.25 – 15.05	Talk of factors affecting decision to leave Navy and become fisheries officer. Job based in Preston, but covered area from Preston south as far as Rhyl, so included River Mersey, Southport, Dee Estuary and North Wales coast.
15.05 – 16.40	Talk of other fisheries officers, Bob Wright from Fleetwood covered area from Preston northwards up to southern half of Morecambe Bay. Graham Morrison covered from northern half of Morecambe Bay up to Duddon estuary. Knew Keith Willacy who was an engineer on fisheries patrol boat. Description of different patrol boats – sometimes helped crew these if short of staff.
16.40 – 17.50	Three crew on patrol boat were members of same family, Eric, John and Bob Croft. The boats covered an area from Cardigan in Wales up to Millom.
17.50 – 18.15	Lived at New Longtown near Preston to be near office.
18.15 – 20.00	Talk of changes noticed affecting way fishing was done from before went in Navy to becoming fishing officer. Mechanisation – description of way shrimping had been carried out at Southport with tank nets pulled by horses and carts being replaced by tractors.
20.00 – 21.00	Talk of different fishing families in Southport and Mersey areas and where they fished.
21.00 – 22.30	Changes seen in Morecambe area from talking to Bob Wright – catches got smaller leading to Morecambe Trawlers folding. The fishermen retired or got other jobs. Gradual decline in fishing to where it is now with only one full-time fisherman in Morecambe, Mark Willacy. Mechanisation never really occurred in Morecambe, the traditional ways persisted, e.g. in cockling.
22.30 – 24.50	Suction dredgers trial use for cockling in north Wales. Description of cockling areas in UK - the Wash and north Wales. Effect of using dredgers in Wales.
24.50 – 25.18	Description of hand picking cockles in Morecambe Bay using rakes and "jumbos".
25.18 – 28.00	Worked as fishing officer for 10 years from late 70s to late 80s – description of decline

	in fishing in that time, e.g. lobster fishing in Wales – difficult to keep track of at that time due to large amounts being caught. Description of different ways of measuring lobster size to check not under-sized.
28.00 – 30.00	Reasons for decline in Morecambe Bay fishing discussed. Environmental factors discussed – changes in agriculture using chemicals. Over-fishing of cockles.
30.00 – 31.36	Impact on seed mussels of bad weather in Morecambe Bay. Description of seed mussels being collected and taken to Menai Straits in Wales to make mussel beds.
31.36 – 33.36	Talk of decline of brown shrimps in Morecambe Bay. Lack of monitoring of chemical make-up of sea water in the Bay. E.g. acidity, nitrates and nitrites.
33.36 – 35.20	Effect of warm water discharge from Heysham Power Station encouraging growth of mussels. Description of turbot fish farm trial at Wylfa Power Station in Wales – black turbot.
35.20 – 37.12	Cockle fisheries affected by storms – smothered by sand when washed into big heaps. Talk of fishing family the Trigg's from the Dee estuary coming to Morecambe Bay to collect cockles when none down there.
37.12 – 38.14	Cockle gangs from Manchester and Liverpool coming to Morecambe Bay. No licensing in place. Led to cockle beds being fished out.
38.14 – 39.32	Regulations introduced after Chinese cockling tragedy. Gang-masters had to get licences, also individual fishermen.
39.32 – 42.58	Description of fishing for cockles in the Wash by boats, using propellers to churn up the sand. Stopped due to killing around 50% of cockles. Suction dredgers brought in to replace this method.
42.58 – 43.59	Talk of cockle fishing in Morecambe Bay in present time.
43.59 – 45.17	After working as fishing officer, went to work for net maker in Bridport, Suffolk, Gundry Bridport. Made nets for all types of fishing. List of depots around the UK. Managed the depot in Lowestoft.
45.17 – 47.02	Lowestoft depot supplied nets for North Sea trawler vessels fishing for plaice. Covered area from Thames Estuary up to Norfolk. Description of fishing types being carried out in that area. Also made agricultural nets for farmers.
47.02 – 48.30	Made all shrimp netting used in the UK. Talk of net making companies in Fleetwood and Grimsby which made netting for trawlers.
48.30 – 50.50	Lofthouse family in Fleetwood supplied cough syrup to Icelandic trawlers. Developed into "Fishermen's Friend" lozenges.
50.50 – 53.45	Stories about friend Ernie (Nicholson) working life making nets in a shed. Economic viability of making nets as orders decreased. Now only one small net-maker in Cornwall who makes netting for bird enclosures. All fishing netting now comes from abroad.
53.45 – 56.30	After 2 years at Lowestoft was transferred to Bridport to set up new fish farm division. Talk of netting for salmon fish farms. Developed knotless netting so salmon did not rub scales off. Manufacture transferred to Portugal as more economically viable. Site in Bridport carried on making aviation nets, etc.
56.30 – 58.39	Global competition in manufacture of fish netting led to company folding in 1980s. Went to work as manager for Portuguese owned company in Fleetwood selling netting. Description of areas netting was sold to.
58.39 – 60.00	Sold rope and twine to Morecambe Bay fishermen. Company did not make shrimp netting. Made trawler netting sold worldwide. Description of decline in deep sea trawling.
60.00 – 61.40	Description of trawlers based in Aberdeen. Fleetwood branch closed so went to work for family company in Fleetwood, Boris Nets, owned by the Howard family which made trawl nets for UK locations and fish farming. Worked on fish farming side for 14 years.
61.40 – 63.32	Went to work for Cotesi UK, Portuguese company making fish netting and agricultural products such as baler twine. Talk of various company takeovers. Main countries now making nets are in India and Portugal.
63.32 – 65.10	Retired 6 or 7 years ago. Still does some agency work, mainly on agricultural side, such as hop netting.
65.10 – 68.43	Talk of declining state of fishing industry in Fleetwood at this time and what happened to the companies based there in 1980s/90s. Boris Nets only one still going, supplies fish farms.

<b>TRACK 3</b>	
00.00 – 01.34	Discussion about refrigeration – some fishermen bought redundant fridges from ice-cream vans. Most did not have fridges but relied on selling catches straight away.
01.34 – 04.14	Mention of preservatives used for brown shrimp catches and where shrimp were taken to be sold when there was a glut, Fleetwood, Manchester fish market. Possibly Billingsgate.
04.14 – 05.07	Reasons for not having fridges – expense, plus could usually sell catch straight away.
05.07 – 07.40	Talk of Fleetwood in early memories (1960s) – railway station, Icelandic trawler fleet, plus all the ancillary trades such as net suppliers, foundry making metal trawler fittings, repair shops.
07.40 – 09.34	Mention of working men's clubs, dockers' clubs. Also the Ice House which made big ice blocks to load onto trawlers to preserve fish.
09.34 – 11.05	Rope works making rope and wire for the fishing industry. Rigging department made cut and marked lengths of wire for the trawlers. Grocery suppliers for the ships such as butchers and greengrocers.
11.05 – 14.00	Whole of Fleetwood town revolved around the fishing industry. One of three deep water ports in the UK that fished in Icelandic waters (others Grimsby and Hull). Decline came when Iceland introduced 200 mile limit to protect fish stocks. Talk of Icelandic cod wars when war ships were used to stop Icelandic ships from attempting to cut the trawler wires.
14.00 – 14.37	Mention of Newfoundland cod fishery – no longer exists as fish stocks were over-fished.
14.37 – 16.18	Cosalt and Euronet net makers in Fleetwood employed women workers to hand-braid double thickness nets for trawlers which could only be made by hand. In Lowestoft out-workers were employed to hand-braid "cod ends" of net for the North Sea fleet.
16.18 – 18.24	Cosalt also employed two men who worked full-time making wicker fish baskets by hand. Used for landing fish before plastic ones came in the 1970s.
18.24 – 20.40	Decline in Fleetwood – only one company left now – Boris Nets. Still has fish market but fish comes down from Scotland. Neaves fish merchant has diversified into fish restaurants.
20.40 – 25.19	Discussion about local phrases and accents at different places. People in Lowestoft known as "puds". Northern phrases "good fettle" and "grand as owt".
25.19 – 27.38	Talk of his varied career – feels lucky to have had variety and met lots of people from various parts of UK.
27.38 – 29.30	Talk of thoughts for the future about fishing industry in Morecambe Bay. Catches not sustainable, fishing is no longer a full-time job. Discussion about marine conservation areas.
29.30 – 32.00	Talk of fishing industry today in Scotland and how marine conservation areas might affect this.
32.00 – 34.30	Talk of time spent with past fishing colleagues and Morecambe in those days as a busy town. Talk of decline in seaside towns in general.
34.30 – 36.42	Characters and people of Morecambe past are special memories. Mention of two more characters which have just come to mind – Bob Hodgson and Gino the Italian who were fishing partners around in the late 1950s and early 1960s.