



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

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TRANSCRIPT SUMMARY

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INTERVIEW NO: H2H2016.26
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Trevor Owen
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1946
INTERVIEWER/S: Mandy Bannon
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 12/09/18
LOCATION: Sunderland Point
SUMMARISER: Deborah Coleman

00.00	Introductions & family background. Trevor Owen was born (early) on 9 July 1946 in Manchester. His parents, Ellis/Ellice and Thomas Owen, both worked in the theatre and were travelling home from the NE to Wales. Thomas (who died when Trevor was 4½) was a producer, putting on big variety shows in the major cities, and his wife was a dancer
01.50	Early life. Trevor lived first in Rhyl, then just outside Manchester, & the family moved to Overton when he was 6 for the sake of his sister's health – she was thought to have TB & the doctor prescribed Morecambe Bay air. They later moved to Middleton, and Trevor came to Sunderland Point when he was 27/28.
03.27	Early involvement in fishing. Always wanted to be a fisherman. As a lad went out with the men, setting nets & lines: mussels in winter, salmon in summer, shrimping in back end. (<i>local fishing families mentioned briefly, see 38.00 for names</i>)
04.30	Setting nets. Nets were set with horses & carts on the west shore for flounders & plaice. 150 yards long, set on stakes, lifted up with tide, dropped as it turned. Angle such that fish swam into them & buried themselves in sand. Set & emptied once a day. Also 'set lines' – hooks on lines, catching whiting, flounders (at night), plaice (day)
05.48	Market for fish. Sold to fish shops – Walter Garner (Yorkshire St, Morecambe), Baxters, Morecambe Trawlers (sprats), Lancaster market: Harry Holgate (Lune Fisheries), Condor Fisheries, (ph) Daleys. Shot rabbits & other game too & sold to some of same shops
07.25	Early career. Wasn't making a living from fishing at this time. Trained as a slaughter man & served his time at Lancaster Slaughterhouse. Packed that in 30 or 40 years ago to fish full time – made a good living & never regretted it. Harder now because of all the regulations – going into Europe was the worst thing we ever did. Used to be able to catch as much of anything as you wanted
08.16	Main catch in Morecambe Bay. Plaice, odd codling. No hake, haddock etc. Still

	plenty of plaice because no one else going after them – Fleetwood finished. Trevor is selling trawler he made himself – ‘Sam York(e)’. Salmon netting all summer. Used to net bass & mullet but sold fast liner boat.
10.00	Salmon netting. 3 different types of net on Lune. Salmon come here to spawn & get used to taste of fresh water; keep working their way back up. Detailed description of draw nets (fixed to pole by bank of river; draw round in half moon shape). Trevor drift nets (at 20.26: this is same as wammelling)
13.30	Drift nets. Go out with the tide. About 4 hours after high water shoot net right across river at buoy ¼ mile down from Sunderland Point, near mouth of river – not allowed ‘this side’. Net 320 yards long; 16 meshes deep; floats on top; held down with lead lines; drifts freely with tide for ½ mile then hauled back to side. 2 or 3 goes, moving right down into Heysham Lake where shipping channel goes & where fish mainly are – they ‘drop off’ from river into sea. Massive tides; water drops from 3’ or less to 15/20’; best place to catch fish. They hit net & get ‘gilled’ – entangled in net.
16.10	Salmon. Don’t usually catch under 5lbs in weight. Trevor uses 5¼" mesh which catches bigger fish better (minimum mesh allowed is 5"). Fish 7lbs & under are called ‘grilth’; over 7lbs ‘salmon’. This June & July Trevor was catching 9-18lb fish. Worth more over 7lbs: not as much waste as head stays more or less the same size. Glasson Smokehouse, hotels, catering companies all want big fish.
18.03	Decline. Wild salmon not in abundance any more. 4 nets left on Ribble; East Coast fisheries to be closed down by 2020; 12 drift licences on Lune have been reduced to 7 by successive net limitation orders. Were 46 half nets, now 12. Draw nets (traditional way of fishing, used in Scotland & Wales): 3 when Trevor at school; now 1. John Gerrard last holder
21.20	Boats. Trevor built current boat (detailed description of construction). Modern method: finished in fibreglass & resin. Traditional boats were wood, ‘clinker built’, made locally by Woodhouse's at Overton. ‘Nobbies’ built by Crossfield's at Arnside – one here till 2 weeks ago – traditional shrimping boats, 28 – 33’ long. Fleetwood ‘prawners’ same shape but 35-37’ long
24.50	Prawns & shrimps. ‘Sprawns’, or pink shrimps, are prawns but the size of shrimps, come out of Fleetwood & have white flesh; Morecambe Bay shrimps are brown. Women at Morecambe Trawlers would complain about sprawns, as had to be peeled rather than picked
25.58	Shrimping. Trevor does some shrimping, with boats, around Heysham & Half Moon Bay. Tractors, as at Flookburgh, are more limiting. Shrimps are boiled on the boat; at Flookburgh they’re taken home to boil. Go out about 3 hours after high water with big boat (Sam Yorke) or 4 hours with smaller boat (Della), to bottom of Lune, or sometimes up to Heysham Lake / Harbour. Best if can ‘run’, keep going backwards & forwards, as between Wyre & Lune.
29.00	Equipment. Shrimping net sunk to bottom. Big ash beams, bolted together & roped along the centre, with iron ends or ‘shoes’, 15” by 19” on bottom. Between them a chain with rubber bobbins (used to be hard oak) & metal spacers which turn on sea bed. Bottom of net fastened to spacers (with rope, used to be leather), chain pulls it along (<i>more detail provided</i>). Nets made of stringy twine, best made of plastic, courlene but dearer. In old days people used to sit at home in winter & knit nets from string
33.00	Salmon nets. Trevor could make salmon nets & mends his own now by eye. Need to get knots & gauge right & cut bad out (<i>more detail</i>). Interviewer asks about old photos of salmon nets drying on poles: Trevor explains made of flax so would rot if left wet; hung up to dry from Friday evening to Monday morning
35.30	Engines. No engines then (<i>at time of photos – up to last 10 years or so</i>): everyone rowed or sailed to get from A to B then would scull with one hand & put the nets out with the other (or go out in pairs). Trevor always used engines – used to take magneto home & put in oven overnight to keep it warm. All diesel now – twin cylinder Lister, Ford in big boat. Doesn’t like outboards.
38.00	Memories & music. Trevor learned his trade from local fishing families & neighbours: Braids, Kellets, Taylors, Burrows, Baileys, Worthingtons, Butlers, [<i>at 52.00 adds</i>] Woodhouses, Gerrards, Massons, Willacy's, Smiths. He sang / sings in the Fishermen's Choir (‘good fun’) & played in groups all his life (guitar, piano, organ, drums). Always intrigued by fishing & remembers days out with Bill Bailey's

	dad, who had a big trawler – went so far out you could see only just see Blackpool Tower. Caught all sorts – once included 3 tons of starfish. Enjoyed gutting fish on board. Small flounders & plaice put in 2 big tubs marked 'PP'. Back at Glasson Dock people would come from Lancaster & help themselves - 'PP' stood for Paupers of the Parish. (This was 1960s). <i>Description of boat & winch.</i> Boat (<i>not clear if Trevor too at that stage</i>) sometimes out for a couple of days at a time, right up the coast to Whitehaven & beyond
45.15	Foreign competition. Foreign boats would take anything, including starfish & undersized catch – ruination of the fishing industry
46.14	Preparing shrimps. Would tow net for an hour, pull it in & riddle contents (Margaret did this). Crabs & small plaice knocked back; shrimps went into shrimp riddle: 'threepence ha'penny' (3½) size gets rid of small ones quickly; 'threepence farthing' (3¼) size takes a lot longer. Takes too long to pick small shrimps. Then shrimps given a good boil in saltwater – can't overdo them, & pick better if well boiled. Naturally grey – ready when pink with little white spots. Then they're cooled in a net over the side. Enjoyed shrimping
49.18	Selling shrimps. Used to sell to Baxters in Morecambe for potting, or people would buy rough & pick themselves. Shrimps are very seasonal – they disappear when weather cools down & it's a bonus if you get any after Bonfire Night here (still around off Blackpool, but a real trek). Shrimps a mainstay in Morecambe: used to be 20-30 boats when Trevor left school. Now 2 fulltime boats, both with shops – Willacy's, Edmondson's. Other boats (<i>in past</i>) sold at the door (some still do in Flookburgh & Lytham). Otherwise Morecambe Trawlers & Lune Fisheries on Lancaster market were the main takers for picked shrimps
53.00	Cockling & musseling. Used to do a lot & had licences to work in Welsh waters too. Would sell 30-40 bags of cockles twice a week to Evans. Bags took 28lbs but would fill with 30lbs to allow for drying out in pickle – all used to go to Leeds. Evans bought smaller quantities of mussels & purified them in stone tanks of clean seawater under ultra violet light, on stone jetty in Morecambe. All sold in shell; but used to boil some cockles in shell for Morecambe Trawlers. Didn't need movement licences back then. Trevor got so busy with other sorts of fishing he passed the business on to Tony Wilson at Flookburgh
57.16	Equipment. Used tractors, quads, jumbos / jumbles (?) for cockling. Would rake in Wales, where jumbos (?) illegal & sand softer. Can't rake in Morecambe Bay – hardest sand in the country. So in MB 2 people would take 1 jumbo; 1 would rake & the other would paddle on the sand – you need water; you can't catch cockles in dry sand. Keep water with you. Then rake cockles into net or riddle. Up to 6 hours at a stretch – only in winter but this modern lot want everything all the time ...
1.00.00	Seasons. Summer: salmon; Sept-early Nov: shrimps; Sept – end May: sprats (mostly go to zoos, sea life centres); Sept – Oct: whitebait (none last year; back this year).
1.01.27	Whitebait. Can drop bogey nets over stern with scaffolding bars at top & bottom – lower till bumps on the sand. Morecambe nobbies fish under front end of boat, rolling gear over side. Need massive anchors as terrific tension on nets. Trevor uses bank nets. Set nets so front & back ends anchored on long ropes, tide comes in, opens net up as it turns, like a big trawl. Mesh graduates in size from big at front to very fine. Need decent tides. Catch whitebait during the day, sprats in the dark. Not many catch whitebait
1.04.40	Stand out memories & hazards. 'It's a standout memory everyday here'. Lots of good memories, good laughs, good times over the years, working with lads from Wales & Holland, travelling up to Scotland. With drift nets the rougher it is the more fish you get, so Trevor would go out when he shouldn't have & no one else would. Big storms last winter meant a lot of trees & other debris in the water, nets ripped in half. Got rid of worst 'catches' but might happen again next year when channels change. Has been stuck on one sunken buoy a few times. Massive 'chandelier type' jellyfish another hazard – not the stings, but the weight. Worst things pieces of timber from Fleetwood – one 15' long; an hour to lift, had to split net to get it out. You always have bad days (e.g. rope round propeller, running aground) but get used to it – doesn't matter how good you are, you never stop learning
1.14.08	Fishing politics. Trevor has been in the Morecambe & Heysham Fishermen's

	<p>Association for years, & Chair for the last c. 15. Most problems caused by Lancaster City Council – don't seem to want fishermen nowadays – making it harder & harder. Also Vice Chair of National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, NW Committee. Campaigned to get out of Europe; Marine Protection / Conservation areas also on agenda – over the top, trying to protect things that don't need protecting: 'How can you protect sand? It'll go where it wants'. Always fighting for something. Landing size of bass increased because in decline – it's because Belgians & French take 10 tons each a day, then wonder why there's nothing left</p>
1.17.03	<p>Future of fishing. Not optimistic. Done, finished, wouldn't recommend to anyone – waste of time except maybe for bigger Scotch boats. Price of fish no better than 10 years ago, while costs of boats, fuel, insurance, nets all go up.</p>
1.18.00	<p>Living & working at Sunderland Point. Been lucky, it's been great, made quite a lot of money in shellfish industry, for Dutch, French, Welsh firms. Shellfish were bread & butter; sprats & salmon in between. Did well from cockle boom, but before regulating orders limited quantity – ok if paid say £1 per kilo, but not 40p. 'We had the best times – there was a lot of stuff.' Some lads still make good money locally musseling, small orders. Hard work but enjoyable. Worked all the way round the coast. One year had Christmas Day off – that was it for the year!</p>