



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

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**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW**

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**FRONTSHEET**

INTERVIEW NO: H2H2016.27  
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: John Thomas Wilson  
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1945  
INTERVIEWER/S: Jenn Mattinson  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 10/10/16  
LOCATION: Flookburgh  
TRANSCRIBER: Marion Dawson

**Summary of Interview:**

**No of Tracks: 3**

**Main Contents of Transcript (Brief Description):**

Track 1: (replace with title of track) Family history, children, growing up, fishing with his grandfather, farm work when fishing was hard, different fishing methods for different fish, women's work, areas for fishing, wholesalers.

Track 2: More detail of fishing methods, nets, seasons, licencing, DEFRA, how much fishing pays, memories of other fishing families and nicknames, Silver Band, other pastimes, more on farm work, stories of close calls, health, clothing.

Track 3: Funny stories of local people, local dialect, changes in the transportation of fish, prices, salmon fishing, boiling shrimps, potting shrimps, heritage and the future of fishing, hopes for the future and the best thing about being out in the bay.

**So John, could we start? Please could you tell me your date of birth?**

1st of the 10<sup>th</sup> 1945.

**And your full name?**

John Thomas Wilson.

**And could you tell me a bit about your family background? So the full names of your parents please?**

My father was **Harold [?] [00:19]** Wilson, known as Ted. My mother was Nelly Wilson, but her proper name was **Helen [could be Ellen] [00:28]**.

**Could you tell me a bit about your grandparents on both sides? So your mum and dad's parents?**

[00:39]

My mum's parents come from up Cleator Moor. He was a miner, iron ore miner. Went to Africa, diamond mining, and come down here when work dried up out there, come down here to live. And my father, they were fishermen here. And his father and his father before him, as far as I... I don't know really how far it goes back.

**And can you remember the names of all your grandparents?**

[01:08]

My grandparents was John Farrington on my mother's side, and I can't remember my grandmother's name. Terrible, isn't it?

**That's alright.**

And my grandfather was Thomas Samuel Wilson and his wife was Anna Wilson.

**So tell me a bit about the family fishing network then, how far it goes back and...**

I honestly don't know. Probably time immortal, I don't know. Back to the Vikings? I don't know how far it would go back. It does go back a long time all these, don't they? I'll have to go on one of these what-do-you-call-its.

**Who Do You Think You Are? The shows on BBC you mean?**

Yes.

[01:52]

**(Laughs) So were they always fishing then, in Flookburgh?**

More or less, yeah. My grandfather did have a time he went salmon fishing up to Scotland, a little village called Glencaple down below Dumfries. One reason was because the channel come in here, both channels come in together, and they couldn't work out here. So he went salmon fishing up there for a while. But his wife wouldn't stop so they had to come back here. Or else we might've been there an' all.

**And whereabouts were you born then, John?**

I was born in Flookburgh.

**Whereabouts?**

Station Road. I can't remember what number. I don't know what number it is, but Station Road, Flookburgh. Up there.

**And you've lived here all your life?**

I lived at Ravenstown when I first got married, for about 30 years, and then we come down here.

[02:40]

**And you're married to June.**

To June, yes.

**And you have a son: one son, Michael.**

And another son, Thomas. And a daughter, Tina.

**And Michael's a fisherman? Mm. And what do the other two do?**

Thomas is an electrician, his own business. And our Tina is a sister in Carlisle hospital.

**So how come only one of the sons went into fishing?**

Well, that's what happens, isn't it, like? Yeah. He left school, got an apprenticeship with Barrow Council, and went there to work.

**And Michael was always the keener one, was he?**

Well, I don't know. He did do a bit of fishing with me, Thomas. He still does a bit. He goes cockling. If 'cockles are open, he'll probably do a bit of cockling.

[03:32]

**And could you tell me just a bit about growing up in Flookburgh and what it was like? What you can remember?**

Well, you'd walk up Flookburgh at one time and I was nearly related to everybody. Now I hardly know anybody. And you would go up and you would hear boilers going and riddlers going everywhere and horses and carts. Carts were stood outside their houses. And now there's nothing left. Then it went to tractors, but if you look up Flookburgh now, would you see a tractor on the roadside? No.

**And there's not really many fishing families left in Flookburgh that are actually active, is there?**

No. There's about 3 of us, yeah.

**Could you just tell me who those are, just for clarification?**

Well, there's us (Wilson's), Mannings (Stephen Manning), and McClures.

[04:19]

**So when you were growing up then, tell me about how being in a family of fishermen, how that affected your childhood?**

I honestly don't know whether it did, you just took it for granted, like, didn't you? You went fishing. Well, we'd call it "going to 'sand", because it's all sand out here. And anyone who talks about it here: "Are you going to 'sand today?" You don't say "Are you going fishing today?" "Are you going to 'sand?" Whether that's unique to us, I don't know.

**And what about, like, the times of day and things? It's funny hours, isn't it?**

Well, it's day and night, isn't it? Sometimes you're going early morning, sometimes it's afternoon, sometimes you go twice a day.

**And do you have... I'm trying to sort of capture some of those *really* early memories. You know, as a little boy, and what you identified with being in a fishing family?**

I don't really know what you mean by that exactly.

**What you can remember? Some of your earliest memories?**

[05:28]

One of my vivid memories was when I was about 11 or 12. We used to cockle. Everybody cockled with horse and cart, and sent them ont' train to Manchester, Wigan... There was my grandfather and my father, they were cockling. You had to get your order. If you were sent an order, you'd do your best to get 'em. You didn't want to lose your order. And this night, my father had pleurisy, he couldn't go. So my grandfather comes down and he said we'd go in't morning, and I said "Aye, alright then." So we'd go int' dark, because we knew where there was some quite good, but we didn't want anybody else to know int' daylight, see?

So my father said, "Take that storm lantern," which was a... you know, a paraffin lamp, you know what I mean. Anyhow, so off we went with t' horse and cart int' dark. And my grandfather'd be a fella, ooh... 80 'appen then. Anyway, we gets there and I lights this lamp. And my grandfather was rather a ram bash fella, he said, "What's tha fetched that thing for? That's na good, we don't need that."

After a bit, we were walking away, he said, "Go and bring your lamp, go and bring your lamp, we'll need it near, then we can see what we're doing."

Anyhow, after a bit, he said, "Youngster [?], the bloody lamp's gone out now, go and see what's wrong with it!"

So I said, "Oh, Granddad, water's here, it's all water!"

"Ooooh, bloody hell," he said. "Tide's come!"

And we'd to get yok (ph) up quick, get 'horse, and then we'd to gallop up 'sand to get through what we'd call meetings (ph), where 'tide comes together.

Anyhow, we gets home. He said, "Don't you tell your father what's happened." He said nowt, like.

Anyhow, next day we'd go again. He said, "I'll fetch the watch." He lived up here, back across. "I've got a watch." I said, "No, don't."

"Then we know what time to come home."

Anyhow, he went int' house, come back, got ont' cart, and off we went: started working again. After a bit, this alarm clock went off. Horse ran away, frightened! Come back. We'd spent all t' time looking for this horse! He'd took the alarm clock to show what... (laughs). That's what the trickster did in them days.

[07:41]

**He sounds like quite a character, your grandfather.**

He was a character. He was very well known, yeah.

**What can you remember about him then? Just about his character and his personality?**

[7:51]

Well, it's hard to tell, like. He were just a ram bash fella. He was very well known around here. In them days, they used to do a lot... through summer they used to do turnip thinning. When fishing was poor, they'd thin turnips for these farmers and that. And when they were *really* poor, and nothing doing, they used to walk into Yorkshire hay timing. They used to say they were going "ont' tramp", and just take whatever they had with them, and stop somewhere and go making hay. 'Cause they'd nothing else. **Hungered [? 8:22].**

[08:24]

**And how... so your memories then of your childhood, you know... were there times when actually you were quite poor and you remember that there wasn't... ?**

Nearly everybody was, or seemed to be poorer than what we are now. People moan about how poor they are now and these food banks and that. Well, then, they *were* poor then. Rationing was just still on. You went to 'butchers, and you took your ration card with you (laughs). For my mother, yeah.



[08:52]

**And what about the sort of seasons and, you know, the fishing? And were some years better than others and how did that affect it?**

Well, you'd always get that. You'd always get good years and bad years. Yeah. We used to what we'd call net for flukes all summer: baulk nets. But they're about... well... Set stake nets... up to... we were allowed up to 400 yards long. Stream nets is another, and what we call bag nets: all for flukes and plaice and mullet, or whatever we'd got. Salmon if we were **unlucky** [? 09:22] and got one. And then in winter time back end, we'd start shrimping. And then winter time when it'd come cold and shrimps had gone, we'd cockle all winter. And that's basically what we do now really.

[09:34]

**And how did you start getting involved then? Did you just start going out then with your dad and your granddad?**

Mm-hm.

**And then you just...**

Left school on the Friday, went cockling on the Saturday.

**And you didn't want... did you ever want to do anything else or...?**

No. No. I was at school and they offered me jobs in Barrow shipyard. I could've gone there. In them days you could get a job at anything. In 'shipyard... Well, all I wanted to do was go down there.

**And what was it then that appealed to you about it?**

You tell me! Aye, you tell me. I don't know. Have you ever been down there?

[10:10]

**I haven't been... I haven't fished.**

No? But you have been out int' bay? I don't know, it's just summat... summat you need to do, isn't it? I don't know.

**You just had a will?**

Mm.

**If you want to have a drink, by the way, you can.**

I don't like it hot. I can't drink hot water.

[10:35]

**OK. So I'm thinking about... you mentioned about your dad and your granddad. So what were the women in the family... How were they involved?**

My Auntie Ethel, she was my father's sister, she did all the filleting, filleting o' flukes. She was a good filleter an' all. Mm. T' other ones picked shrimps. Yeah. It was all... everybody helped out.

[10:59]

**And how did they pick the shrimps, then? Did they do it together, was it a collective thing, or did they do it individually or... ?**

Sometimes they did it all at one house or sometimes... I had another auntie lived at Cark and I used to go onto there, take 'em to her, and her and her daughter would pick there. Or sometimes there was two or three in an house. Mm.

**And was it always the women then, that picked?**

Yes.

**Did the men ever do it?**

Very little. Yeah.

**And why was that?**

Well, the men went and caught 'em, and the women picked 'em (laughs).

**That was just the sort of family dynamic?**

That was the way it was, yeah. Mm.

[11:35]

**And I'd love to hear a bit more about the horses and carts and, you know, how fishing used to be.**

Well, it was all horses and carts when I left school. I don't know what the... maybe at least 50 horses in this village. I'd see as many as 30 going out there at once. Horses and carts. Yeah.

**Wow. Just that image is just fantastic.**

Mm. Mm.

[11:58]

**So did you have your own horse?**

I never, no.

**The family, or ... ?**

Yeah, we'd two horses when I left school, and then by the time I got to about 17, 18, tractors were coming in. A few had messed about with tractors a bit earlier on. One reason they come in winter of '63, if you can remember that... you won't remember that (laughs)... 1963 was very frosty. Have you never heard of it? It was just like being at Antarctica out here. Ice floes forever more. And we went to... we were cockling at Silverdale, out from Silverdale down there, and that become all tractor work, you had to have a tractor. And then we got on with using tractors then, and when we come back to work back here, we carried on with tractors, and horses sort of went out of date.

[12:48]

**So when you first started, you did actually start then with...**

With 'horse.

**Horse and cart. So when you'd just started, when you'd left school then you'd have a couple of years, did you, with horses?**

I did two years with horses, mm.

[13:02]

**And can you tell me about the horses that you had then in the family? Did they have names and... ?**

Yeah. We had a little one called Darkie, lovely horse, but he was a bit too small. But if you went shrimping with it, when it got into 'water, it got up to about knee deep, all it wanted to do was lay down and play int' water! A bit stupid. You'd a job to keep it standing up. We were always frightened it would get down and break 'shaft or something like that. And then we'd another one, a big white one called Prince. I didn't like that one. It was a bit wild was that one. And then we'd another old horse called Toby. That was a grand old horse. And we'd that till we packed up with them.

[13:40]

**And can you just describe actually how you used the horses and the carts then? Like, physically, how... Did you use them for shrimping?**

Yeah, yeah. You'd go shrimping with 'horse and cart. Then you'd, as we would say, you'd wade (ph) your horse into 'water. And 'water would... a good horse would wade (ph) over its back, no bother. And if it went into a hole, it would just paddle away: doggy paddle with its front legs, and walk along on its back legs, int' cart, like. They knew what they were doing.

**And were you steering the cart then?**

Well, yeah, you'd to steer the horse, like. Tell it which way to go, yeah.

**And how did you know which way to go?**

(Laughs) Well, if it got a bit deep, you'd to come out to 'side a bit. And a good horse... Like I said, we used to do this baulk netting, and they were 400 yards long. And your horse would go along, and you'd be putting the stakes onto 'back, loading 'em up to... and it would follow you, you know, alongside o' nets, and you'd shout "Stop! Way!" and then "Get up!" and off it would go. And same with 'nets like, when you were calling your net in. It knew its job, like. Yeah.

[14:49]

**And so you mentioned... was it sort of then... '63, did you say, when tractors... ?**

'63 when it sort of got going, yeah.

**In that harsh winter.**

Yeah.

**And how was that different then?**

How was what different, do you mean?

**Just the transition from horses. Like, what happened to the horses? Did everybody decide that all of a sudden they were going to horses, or how did it all sort of come about?**

Yeah, well, everything went a bit quicker. Your horse used to take at least... sometimes an hour and a half, two hours walking from here to where we were

cockling at. Well, you could do it in half an hour. And a horse, you'd have to get up in a morning, make it a feed, and make a feed to take with you. And then bring it back. Then you'd to feed it again when you'd come back at wintertime, like. You couldn't just turn it out, like. It was a lot to... We thought it was a lot quicker, but we'd breakdowns with tractors, so whether it is or not... (laughs). Yeah.

[15:47]

**And did you have a method that you preferred then, would you say? Or was it just... Do you have an opinion on sort of, you know, the way that things changed, and whether it was for the better or worse?**

Everything changes. I suppose it is for better. It's what they call progress, in't it, like? Yeah. Whether I want to go back to an horse, I don't know. I don't know. I don't think so, really.

**So you'd use the horses for trawling, like, through the water?**

Mm.

**And you'd use them... you said about setting the baulk nets.**

Mm.

[16:22]

**So how would you use them in the cockling then? Was that just to carry?**

They just took 'em... carted everything there and carted the cockles back. You would go to cockle. And when you got there, you'd what you call 'set off': take it

out o' cart, and turn cart up into 'wind, and stand your horse behind it, and give it a feed. Tie it to a stake or summat so it didn't wander off. And then when you'd come to go home, you'd yok (ph) up again and come... 'cause you're maybe there maybe as far as five, six hours sometimes cockling.

[16:55]

**So in terms of then the areas where you actually went, did that change when you moved from tractors?**

No, just same spot, yeah.

**So whereabouts... where were like the hotspots? Where did you always go to fish?**

Well, it moves about. You never... basically hardly in the same spot twice, you know? Basically all out int' bay, here. But it alters. Rivers and that, the channels alter all t' time. And when you've been going a few years, you know where you want to be, or you think you know where you want to be. Or you think you know. And you move out. And then cockles, well, they're here and then they're there, and a good year here and a good year there.

[17:38]

**And was it always within the bay of Flookburgh, or did you go further afield?**

I've fished up in Scotland, on 'Solway, and as far down here as er... down below New Brighton, down on t' Mersey, just below side o' Mersey. Southport, in Southport, Lytham.



**Was that through necessity or... ?**

Yeah, yeah.

**When things weren't as good... ?**

Yeah, that was mainly... well, it was all cockling. When there was no cockles here but there was some somewhere else, you went there. Mm. That was quad bikes or... quad bikes or boats. Mm.

[18:19]

**So could you talk a little bit about that then? So the transition... so, are tractors still... they're still used, aren't they?**

We still have tractors, yeah, old Nuffields.

**And how then does the emergence of the quad bikes... how does that change things?**

Quad bikes, they use quad bikes now mainly for musseling on what they call mussel scars: off Barrow, down off Foulney Island there. 'Cause it slutches you bad, travelling. And you can get onto 'scars with a quad bike, and you're not doing a lot of damage to 'mussels and that, you're not squashing them with a bit... Where there's mussels, there's usually slutch, and tractors won't travel through it. But if you get a quad bike, so if you just unload it and pull it out... but you can't do that with a tractor so well.

**So have you got a tractor and a quad bike?**

I've two or three tractors. My son has all his quad bikes (laughs). He's the quad bike man.

**Right, so you leave that to him, do you?**

More or less, now, yeah, yeah. He's more musseling. I've got too old for musseling, really.

**Is that because it's... ?**

One... Well, I don't need to do it, I don't need the money. And one thing... when you're musseling, you're in slutch all 'time, maybe that deep, up to above your ankles in slutch. And pulling your feet out upsets my knees. Yeah. So I leave it to these younger people. And the humping, lifting bags of mussels on and off and that, makes it hard work. So I'll leave it to the young 'uns.

[19:50]

**So when you said... so you said that you were further afield then, going to different types, different areas of the bay... I mean, when you were in Flookburgh, how far out would you actually go then to do the shrimping?**

Erm... I've seen as... be as far from what we'd call "Banking End": end o' marsh there, down to... as far as about six mile: front banking. But you might be down... you might be only a mile and a half off Barrow, you know? But you are this side o' channel. You can't go straight across there, if you know what I mean. Usually about three or four mile out.

[20:33]

**And did you ever do much over sort of Morecambe way?**

Yeah, I've cockled over Morecambe way, yeah. A few times. And then one time, after that hard winter, that very hard winter in '63, it was that hard it killed all the cockles here. There was none left anywhere. And we started catching what they call whitebait. Do you know what whitebait is?

**Mm-hm.**

We did that for quite a few years. We had a factory. Young's used to take 'em. And there was another one at Fleetwood [?], fishermen down there, they would take 'em. And now that's gone out of date.

[21:09]

**It seems to have just gone out of fashion, doesn't it, whitebait?**

Whitebait? Well, one thing that upset... well, Young's packed up and another... We used to pack 'em in... or they used to, and we did it an' all, pack 'em in pounds. And it went onto what they call this 'free flow', they went through blast freezers, and froze them individually like matchsticks, and a chef could just get a few out of a bag and chuck 'em in his frying pan. Well, we couldn't do that. It wasn't worth fitting up with blast freezers to do that, so the job went out of fashion.

[21:43]

**So just tell me then... so how were you involved in... because there was a co-operative, wasn't there?**

Yeah.

**So that was Young's?**

No. Flookburgh Fishermen's...

**But that was the first...**

Young's come here first for shrimps. And then they set up on their own, what they call Flookburgh Fishermen down t' road here, to get them at a better price.

**That was... was that in response to Young's then? They weren't getting...**

They thought they'd get more money do it theirself. Mm.

**And how... you were involved with them?**

No, not really, no. I wasn't a member, no.

**So how come you weren't a member? You just...**

We stuck wi' Young's (laughs).

**Right, OK. Did it get quite political then?**

Not really, no. We were always quite happy wi' Young's. They always paid a fair price. And at one time, about 1953, just after that, there was a lot of cockling here, and we carried on cockling, my father carried on cockling and didn't do any shrimping for a while. So there was no need to join 'shrimp factory, if you understand what I mean.

[22:44]

**So you basically throughout... you supplied Young's throughout most of your career?**

Yeah. Mm.

**So that's like basically most of your fish then went through Young's, did it?**

All the shrimps, yeah, and whitebait, yeah.

**And is that still the case?**

No, there's no Young's here now.

**There's another factory though, isn't there, now? Is it Furness Fish and Poultry?**

Furness Fish down here, yeah.

**Do you have anything to do with them?**

They take our shrimps, yeah.

**And did you just sort of transfer then, when Young's parted [?] onto them?**

When Young's packed up here, Flookburgh Fishermen was still here, we sold some to them. We took 'em... Young's had a factory in Annan, we used to take 'em to Annan. Whitebait we used to take to Mac Fisheries in Fleetwood, we dealt with them for a while.

**And you sell some out of your front door?**

We sell some out the front door. And we sell some to Clare here down at Furness Fish.

**So you've got a few different spots that you deposit it?**

Mm. The cockles all go to... well, I suppose they end up on the continent somewhere. But they go... this Welshman Mark Swiston, he takes 'em for boiling plants, boil them all up.

**Track 2**

**So John, could you just describe then the different types of fishing that you're involved in? I know that we've talked a little bit about it, but if you could just say specifically what your family does in terms of fishing?**

Now? Yeah, well, we catch flukes and plaice in nets, and cockles when they're opened. And shrimping. And mussels, of course.

[00:30]

**And could you just briefly describe the different processes that are involved? So you know, you often use different nets and different bits of equipment for each kind of method of fishing.**

Well, cockling we use what we call a jumbo, which is a board which we wobble on the sand, which causes them to float to the top, and then basically scrape them up with a rake into a riddle, give them a riddle, give it a shake and into 'bucket.

Fluking, you set your nets and hopefully you'll catch summat. And our biggest bugbear on that is jellyfish and seaweed. Now, this time of year, jellyfish have gone because it's gone colder, and luckily this year we've been very clean.

Shrimping, you pull a chassis (ph) with two trawlers behind it, and hopefully when it comes out of the water it's got summat int' net! (laughs)

**And has that changed then from what you used to do?**

No, it's basically the same. Just the same.

**And you said you do musseling as well?**

Yeah.

**So how do you mussel?**

Musseling you go out onto 'scars on your quad bike and just hack 'em off with your rake and bag 'em up.

[01:42]

**Erm... what was I gonna ask you?**

**So in terms of like the equipment then, has that changed very much?**

**Because things like the jumbo and the craam, and riddle for shrimps, do you use riddles?**

Yes.

**They've been used for decades, haven't they?**

Yes. As long as... well, as long as I can ever remember. But the jumbo... the tale about the jumbo... it was invented here in my grandfather's time. Before that, they used to drag 'em out o' sand, rake 'em straight out o' sand. Or get 'em with what I

call a craam, which is a three pronged little fork, and they would hook 'em out. You could see eyes o' cockles, what we call **groating (ph) [02:30]** when it squirts its water out, or **mossing (ph) [02:33]**, you pick 'em one at a time. Then one day, they took a feed for 'horse in a bath tin. You know, a round bath tin, old galvanised bath tin. Two of our lads got in and waddled it about a bit and these cockles come up. So this fella thought, "Well, I'll make a board like that", put some handles on it, and that was the invention of the jumbo. So the story goes.

Now, for riddling shrimps, we always used to riddle by hand, you know, in a hand riddle. And now we've made a **petrol [?] [33:04]** riddle. We just shove 'em all onto 'riddle, and it shakes it backwards and forwards and riddles 'shrimps for us. A labour saving device.

**And that's to do with the size, isn't it, of shrimps?**

You have to riddle your small ones out, and get your small flukes and plaice, whatever is in 'em, yeah.

**And the jumbo then, do you think that is a true story?**

That's what we've always been told. So yeah, as far as I know, that's a true story, yeah.

**And do you know the name of the person who...**

No, not really, no.

**...allegedly invented this jumbo?**

I think they were Butlers. Mm.



**But it's like a sort of folklore?**

Yeah. My grandfather used to tell us this tale, like, yeah, so...

[03:47]

**And what about use of nets?**

Nets are basically all the same: you know, stake nets or... We don't set baulk now, I don't know why but... well, one reason why, since this monofilament and that, you can catch stuff without... you know, what we call **struppenin (ph) [04:06]** now. They can't see 'nets so they get tangled up in 'em. Once, over baulk nets and that, you set it in a semicircle. As tide come in, it all lifted up. And then when tide dropped, it dropped down and it trapped your fish. And now with these monofilaments, they get **struppenin** - what we call **struppenin (ph) [04:25]**.

**And you can just buy these nets now, can't you?**

Mm.

**Did your family used to make them?**

Yeah. Everybody used to make their own nets.

**And who used to make them?**

Well, I still make nets to this day: shrimp nets. Well, you buy a sheet of shrimp netting. You used to knit 'em by hand, but now you just go buy a sheet of shrimp netting and cut it up and stitch it up yourself. Mm. But all the fluke nets and that were all hand knitted. That was the winter job. Yeah.

**And the men and the women would do the knitting?**

No, mainly men did it.

**And was that just because it was a particular skill or... ?**

I don't know. That was just what they did, like. You know? It was just a pastime. In them days, going back then, there was no television.

**So that's how you'd entertain yourself on an evening?**

You'd knit a few nets all winter (laughs).

**I imagine it's quite a skill though, because you need like... I've seen one of those netting needles...**

Mm.

**You know. And to actually have the patience and skill to sort of...**

Well, it's just repetitive. It's very simple. Yeah.

[05:36]

**And somebody said...**

**Now I don't... I'm not sure whether this applies to this area at all but I'll ask the question. Someone was telling me about charms on nets.**

No.

**Or something that... you know... the fishermen... it's like a superstitious thing. So sometimes some of the fishermen would have charms attached to the nets.**

No, never heard of that.

**No?**

No.

**I didn't think it applied to this area.**

No.

**It's going back, yeah, many, many years. I didn't think Morecambe men would (laughs).**

No, I've never heard of owt like that.

[06:16]

**Erm... and what about the seasons then, and the months, the times of year and what you fish for?**

Well, as I said, we start... well, cockling int' back end, starting back end when 'cold weather comes end of November, and cockle through till whenever – April. And then start with shrimping, and shrimp the summer and a bit o' netting at 'same time. And then er... net and shrimp right up till... well, about November again. And start cockling again.

[06:57]

**And you said before that... you know, the different years, you have good years and you have bad years.**

Mm, mm.

**Do you think there's any particular reason for that or... ?**

Well, as far as I know, it's just nature. We've a lot of cockles here now. And a few years before, we'd right good sets of cockles, very good sets, you know, what we call **wiert (ph) [06:58]**: young cockles, very small cockles. And by Christmas, they'd all died. Why, we don't know. I asked our fisher scientist to investigate why but they never come up with any answer. So... that happened about two or three years. So why, I don't know. I get samples every year – every quarter. Well, I used to get them for Defra, and now I get 'em... they've packed up, have Defra, I just get 'em for Heysham Power Station. They've just been today, has Heysham, for their samples.

So... we get to know what's going on even if it's closed, 'cause I get permission to go and get a few cockles for *them*. So we always know what's happening ont' sand, because you're always having a look to see how things are going on. But why they died, I don't know. I could never find it out. There was a lot of rain. Now, whether that rain... I can't really see it killing 'em to that extent, but... I don't know why they died. But it happened two or three years.

[08:22]

**And you're collecting samples, and what do they do with them?**

They test 'em for radioactivity. Mm.

**And do you get the results then?**

Yeah, yeah. If you can understand 'em. All I can understand is it's a lot lower now than it was. It's got lower and lower all 'time.

**And why's that then?**

Well, there were a lot... they tightened up. Greenpeace come to Windscale, didn't they, when they were pumping out there, and that? And made a big noise. So they've had to clean things up a bit. Hm.

[08:53]

**And you mentioned about... we were talking, just when we had a little break, about policy and the cockle beds are often closed and re-opened. Can you just explain how that works?**

Well, they close...

**Who decides it and ... ?**

The Fisheries decide. Yeah. Or sometimes now we're getting these bird people. They want so many leaving for the birds. Mm.

**And has that changed then a lot since... ?**

Well, it never was like that, like. It were just an open fishery here. Anybody could go. It was a public fishery, anybody could go and get as many cockles as they wanted. Now you have to have a licence to get over... is it about seven pound? If

you want more than that you have to have a licence. I have to pay £500 a year for a licence.

**But this has all come about since the cockling tragedy?**

Mm. It all stems from there.

**And so... is there any way that you can work with them in terms of when they're open and when they're not, 'cause... ?**

Well, our Michael's been to a meeting today to see about getting it open. So he'll be able to tell you more about that. But I think basically they more or less do what they want. Mm.

[10:14]

**And I was wondering about... so obviously we've now voted to be out of the EU.**

Yes.

**And how that will affect the fishing?**

I don't think it will really. I don't know. As long as France keeps buying 'em (laughs). I don't know. I don't think it'll affect us.

**'Cause I think... 'cause before the vote, I remember speaking to quite a number of people. And they were very adamant that they were going to vote out because of EU regulations.**

Mm, mm.

**And how they often impact on the Morecambe Bay fishermen, not necessarily to... To its detriment, rather than positive effect.**

Yeah, yeah. I think so. I don't think anything's ever helped us. But I don't know.

But saying that, they tightened up a lot of things, same as... They stopped some of these boats fishing inside so many... I can't even remember now. You know. So many miles limit. And since they did that, we've a lot more plaice. We're catching... When I left school, we'd plenty of plaice, loads of plaice. And then they sort of disappeared. I think they were overfished. And now we can get quite a nice little few plaice, like. They've come back again. So one thing helps another, like they say.

[11:36]

**And do you think there's any other sort of factors that have affected fishing over the years then? Because there's obviously a lot less people doing it now than there used to be.**

No, no.

**Why do you think that is?**

I don't know why. People want a job now, they want... They get good wages in factories or anywhere. Good money, innit, like? Price of fish... fish is bad to sell. Nobody... Who eats fish now? When did you last eat a piece of fish?

**I love fish, so...**

A lot of people don't eat fish though, do they? Not like... You can't sell fish now like you could. Shrimps, they're not making the money that they should do, you know, today. There's a lot of work goes into shrimps to go and catch 'em, picking 'em. We are paying £3 a pound for picking. A good picker average will pick a pound and a half in an hour, so she's making £4.50 an hour, which isn't a lot today, is it, like? If they're very good, she'll get to £2, which is still £6. Sometimes they'll only pick a pound in an hour, if they're small in the spring. But I think most people that do it, they do it for the love of it, they don't do it for the money exactly.

[12:46]

**And so... because you've got a family unit, you know, you've got yourself and your son and your wife June, and she does the picking for you.**

Mm.

**So do you find that, has times changed, or can you still make enough money to sort of make a living out of it?**

Yeah, you can make a living, yeah. Not a bad living. Yeah, we get by.

[13:10]

**Lovely. Well, I was gonna probe you on a bit more... You know, because you sort of said... you kind of alluded before about... you know, you had some tales to tell and there's some stories of things. Of being out in the bay and when you were fishing, and things that might've gone wrong or right for you. And I just wondered whether you wanted to share a few tales?**

There's that many, I can't remember 'em (laughs).



I honestly can't remember 'em! It's a long time ago and things, if I've thought nowt about it at the time.

[13:46]

**What about memories of sort of your father and your grandfather and going out with them?**

No, I can't really... not really, no.

**How did they teach you to fish?**

Well, you just went. They told you to "get on wi' 'job", "do as I do", "shape yourself."

**Did you do that with Michael then as well? (laughs)**

Yeah, yeah (laughs). Get a big stick (laughs). Yeah.

[14:12]

**And what about things like fridges and refrigeration and stuff? What did you do?**

No-one had... very few people had refrigeration at all. No fridges. Young had a factory there. And my uncle, he used to work for 'em, and he used to come round at about 8 or 9 o'clock at night, every night, and pick 'shrimps up for that day and take 'em back to 'factory, and put 'em in their chillers there, mm.

Now everybody has fridges, haven't they?

**Did you have your own methods then to try and preserve the fish, if you couldn't get to the fridges or... ?**

No, not really. Er... fish, we used to take 'em to... it comes out from a well out here, what we call town **dyke (ph) [15:00]**, where people, before there was mains, where they used to get their water from. And it comes out quite cold. And if you was gonna keep your fish till the next day you would take 'em down there, wash 'em in this water to cool 'em down. Mm.

**And what did the water have in it? Anything in particular?**

Nothing, it was just cold.

**Right. I've heard that sometimes people just use kind of salt or some kind of...**

Yeah, well, they used to salt stuff an' all, yeah, but not in my time. Shrimps, we used to what they used to call scald 'em: pour boiling water which washes gut off 'em. But they don't taste as good after they've been scalded.

[15:34]

**And did you ever try any sort of different methods of fishing? Just to see, you know, what it was like?**

Er... no. When we started whitebaiting, that was all something new. Nobody had ever whitebaited, caught whitebait here. And we went to Morecambe and looked at their boats they were using, and we had to set these trawls here. And we'd a bit of fiddling about, like, till we got 'em to work, like, yeah. We experimented for a while. Mm.

**Until you found methods that...**

Until it worked, yeah.

[16:09]

**And do you ever use a boat for anything?**

We did have a boat. We used to sale from 'Ribble at Lytham, out onto a bank there to cockle. And when it become redundant, we sold 'boat, we got rid of it.

**So you haven't got a boat now?**

Not really, no. We've an inflatable couple of rowing boats, that's all. Mm.

[16:34]

**And I'm quite interested to just find out a bit more about... you know, because it's a really small place, is Flookburgh.**

Mm.

**And you said, you know, that you can remember up to 30 horses being in the street and... you know, and all this kind of buzz going on. What do you remember about sort of some of the other fishing families? And who was around, you know? And did they have their stake at a particular location? And how did all the sort of dynamics work?**

Everybody sort of worked together, you know? You'd all be there, cockling out on a bed, you know, within shouting distance. You talked to one another and that.

And then shrimping, you'd all be shrimping down 'channel and that. Sometimes there's a bit of aggro, but that's competitiveness, isn't it, like, you know? Mm.

**And were there certain families that got on better with others or... ?**

Oh, well, you always get that, don't you, like? Yeah. Some didn't speak and some were friendly, yeah. Luckily I nearly spoke to 'em all (laughs).

**(Laughs) You were like this neutral one in the middle of everything?**

Yeah, try to be, yeah. But yeah.

**So go on then, tell us a bit about who... where was the rivalry then in the families?**

Well, there was always... There's a channel, you go to shrimp and you'll have maybe... in them days you might have six or eight tractors all there. And it's no good you hanging about and being 'last man down. And then if you were 'last man down, you had to try and get back up and be 'first man down. You know? You had to shape yourself or else you didn't get any. And if it was your living, you have to be doing, don't you, like? And if you push in or try and get in front of somebody else, it caused a bit of aggro and that, like, but you had to be doing. Yeah.

**So were the Wilsons... were they gung ho then?**

Oh, no, it was just a bit of friendly rivalry.

**(Laughs) And nicknames...**

We never got to blows!

**Are you sure? (laughs)**

Yes.

[18:43]

**What about nicknames? I've heard a lot that people had different nicknames.**

Oh, yes, yes. My grandfather, he was called Tom "Catty" Wilson. They said he'd eyes like a cat because he could see int' dark. There was another fella, he was called Pongo. Why he was called Pongo I don't really know. Another one was called Tarro. His brother was called Tarro.

**And can you remember their actual real names?**

Yeah.

**So who was Pongo then? What was his name?**

He was Billy Butler. He was Billy Butler, hm. And everybody knew him as Pongo.

**And Tarro, I've heard that name.**

Tarro, that was his brother. And he'd another brother and he was called Meffat. And he was called Meffat because he was a large lad who used to say "me fat", and it developed to Meffat and he kept that all his life, yeah.

**And what were their first names then? So Meffat was a Butler.**

Yeah. Right, what was his first name?

**What was his first name?**

I can't think of it. Tarro was Harold Butler. I can't think of... Jack! He was Jack Butler was Meffat.

**And did Jack Manning have a nickname?**

No, I don't think so.

**I don't know whether I've ever...**

I don't know.

**I don't know whether anybody's actually...**

No, no. We sometimes used to call... we all played int' band, Flookburgh Silver Band. And sometimes we'd call him Rachmaninov (laughs).

[20:05]

**(Laughs) Were you in the band as well?**

Yeah, yeah.

**Because there was an association with the silver band and the fishermen, wasn't there?**

Oh yeah, yeah. My grandfather was a founder member. My father and his two brothers, they played in it. My son, our Thomas, still plays in it to this day. There's

been a Thomas Wilson int' band since it was started, founded. Whenever it was. I can't remember. 1900s, something like that.

**And how did you get time then, to be in the band?**

How did we? How did we? Yeah. You'd come home from 'sand, have a quick gulp o' tea and belt down to 'band room.

**And what did you play?**

I was a bass player, E flat bass player.

**Do you still play or not?**

No, no.

**No?**

It got a bit too... one thing... it went contest mad. And I wasn't keen on contesting all 'time. Practise a tune for maybe, well, I don't know how many weeks, and then you'd go and play it somewhere for ten minutes. And that was it, never saw it again. And it got a bit competitive. Too time consuming, it got.

**They've been very good, haven't they, Flookburgh?**

Mmm. Oh, they did well, yeah. They went to London a few times. And contesting here, there and everywhere: down in Preston, Blackpool Tower. I played once right in... what do you call it? Int' tower, where circus is, int' circus ring. We were down there waiting to go on, elephants was there, rubbing into your back!  
(laughs)

**Lovely.**

No elephants now. They've gone.

[21:44]

**And so what else did the... You know, sort of looking back, you know, when there was all these families... some of them would play in the band, and what else would they do sort of socially? Did lots of them go to ... ?**

Footballers. One or two did a bit of footballing. Mm. In the football team. Now that's died out, mm.

**Were they...**

And some of 'em used to go 'pub (laughs).

**I was going to say, were a lot of them pub goers?**

No, I don't say a *lot* of 'em were. Some of 'em used to go for a pint or two, yeah. Like we do.

[22:15]

**Over Morecambe side, quite a few of the fishermen were quite erm... strong Methodists.**

Mm.

**And there was quite a link to the church and the fishermen's choir.**



Yeah.

**Was there anything like that over here?**

Well, I think a few fishermen used to sing in 'choir, yeah. Mm.

**And were any of the families... was it linked to a particular religion, or were they particularly religious or... ?**

No, they were just Church of England. A fellow called Harry Shaw, he always sung int' choir, did Harry. Mm.

[22:46]

**And it sounds a bit morbid to ask but... funerals, were they any different? Did they ever have any sort of rituals or things that they particularly did if a fisherman died to sort of honour their... ?**

No, no. Just bury 'em like everyone else (laughs).

[23:08]

**And you mentioned about... I was wondering about sort of different incomes. So when the fishing was hard, you talked about turnips and they used to...**

Mm, they'd go thinning turnips. That was in early summer.

**And was that your family?**

Mm. My grandfather did it and my father did it. Yeah.

**And you talked about hay timing as well. Sometimes they'd go hay timing.**

Yeah, go hay timing. You had to do a bit of farm work to help out, like. Yeah.

**And can you remember anything else that they used to do?**

No, not really, no. Just a bit of farm work. Yeah.

[23:48]

**And so what was it like, you know, when times were hard then, and, you know, if you'd had like a *really*... ?**

I never really knew them hard times. But yes, they were poor. People were poor in them days, weren't they, like? And as I say, you relied on fishing, and you'd good times and bad times. And hopefully you would make a bit. If you were sensible, you would keep a bit from 'good times, to see you through the bad times. But some people didn't.

**I'm just trying to sort of imagine, you know, if you've had a really bad year. You know, people have told me that literally they would just eat fish constantly, and that would be your diet and you wouldn't really have anything else.**

Yeah. No, that's all there was. Yeah.

**So did you ever get sick of the taste of it?**

Oh, as I said, we were never *that* poor. I'm going back into 'time when my father was young, my grandfather's time, like, yeah. No, we were never that bad. Ordinary poor (laughs). Yeah.

[24:40]

**And what sort of skills do you think is needed then to be a fisherman in Morecambe Bay? What...**

Determination. Hm. And a bit o' luck. Hm.

**Erm, anything else sort of personal... I don't know, like characteristics as well? What sort of person do you need to be?**

Well, as I say, you have to be determined, yeah. And a good worker. There's nothing easy in it.

[25:21]

**And can you swim?**

Yes.

**Yes, you can swim, 'cause I've heard that quite a few fishermen just never really learnt to swim.**

They never learnt to swim, no. But when you're down there, I don't think you'd be swimming, you know? And the way the tide comes down there, I don't think you'd have much chance of swimming anymore. Mm. You'd get down there. I've seen... We were down one morning and waiting here. Our Michael was just a bit further

down. And I pulled out. I was waiting for it to come in, and I was stood riddling in the back of me tractor.

And 'tide come and it got to running, and it ran my chassis in. And I jumped ont' tractor, and it just pulled out and got onto 'top, and all 'water lifted up about that high, maybe... oh... a good quarter of a mile wide. And I had that then, and I set off wit' tractor there, it just come up in front of me, and I kept going up there, and tractor was... Nuffield tractor, I'm maybe doing 20 mile an hour and I kept looking back.

“Aye, it's still there.”

I kept looking.

“Aye, it's still there.”

And tractor was doing... you know Nuffield would do 20 mile an hour and it was keeping up to me. And I had that high come in. Mm. Quite frightening.

**Mm.**

But you're not frightened at the time.

But you think, “Silly bugger, what was he doing there?” (laughs). “Why did I stop there that long?”

[26:45]

**Did you ever have any really close encounters then? Have you?**

I've had one or two. When they drill this... when they survey this here bay for barrage. When they put these pipes down, and one, they'd screwed it out, and

they'd left so much under 'sand. And then 'channel moved onto it and I was shrimping down, coming down with chassis down to the water, and it come down and it hit this pipe: stood up about that high, it was. And my rope, which pulls it, broke. So I had to go in and get it, try and undo... sort the nets from round it and one thing and another, and get a rope to it to pull it back up. My father was further up above with 'tractor and rope and he was gonna pull it back up. And just at one point, he got to running and it ran 'chassis down. And then it lifted it all up and threw it over the top of this bar. Luckily I managed to jump out o' way and go down, else it would've gone on top of me and well, I would've drowned, wouldn't I?

[27:48]

**And have you ever lost any tractors or horses?**

Yeah. We never lost horses, but Michael's had one or two tractors... Our Michael lost one, was it two years ago? Yeah. But we got it next day. But it was never any good again. Well, it was buggered to start with so... (laughs).

[28:07]

**And what about health? Like, your health? Has there ever been particular sort of illnesses or ailments that's been connected with your job?**

No. No never ailed nowt, no.

**What about your hands and things like that? 'Cause you didn't used to wear gloves.**

No. We wear gloves in winter now. No, your hands were alright.

**You just would get used to it?**

Yeah.

**I remember Jack Manning was telling me about the sand sometimes over the winter would just be as hard as concrete.**

Mm.

**And you had to be as hard as it.**

Mm. Yeah. For cockling, yeah. Mm.

**But nothing in particular that, you know, you'd suffer for or...**

Nothing ever did you harm, no.

[28:50]

**And your clothing, has that changed much?**

Well, clothing is better now, isn't it, like? Your thermal socks and that. Yeah.

**What did you used to wear then, compared to... ?**

Well, they were just wool and they were always full of holes. Yeah.

**And erm... because in the fishing sort of trade, sometimes Ganseys are quite...**

Ganzers, aye! Well, they've gone out of date. I don't know where you could buy one anywhere now, a Ganzer.

**And did you used to wear them?**

Yeah. Everybody had a Ganzer. That was another name. A fella up there, he was called "Ganzer".

**Oh, a nickname.**

That was his nickname, Ganzer, because he always wore his Ganzer. Saturday, Sunday, whenever he went out, if he was dressed up, he always had his Ganzer on. When he went out, he put a good one on (laughs). His new one.

**What was his real name?**

I can't remember what his real name was now. I was only a lad then. 'Cause I always remember this fella called Ganzer. Mm.

**And you said "Ganzer". You see, I say "Gansey".**

Yeah.

**Is it... ?**

Well, it's just a corruption of the word, in't it? It's a corruption of the word jersey... Guernsey, in't it? Is it Guernsey or jer- ? Ganzer. We would always call it "get tha Ganzer on."

**And in some areas, the Gansey is actually quite... it's associated with that area, do you know what I mean? It's almost like a coat of arms.**

Mm.

**Did they have any particular types then round here? Or you just had a Gansey and that's it?**

You just had a... yeah, yeah. But as I say, I haven't seen one here for... oh, I don't know, 30 years 'appen. No, I don't know where you would get one now.

**So what's replaced them?**

Just ordinary Asda's (laughs). Yeah. Get a jumper from Asda's now.

**A woolly jumper? (laughs)**

Yeah, yeah.

**And your footwear and things like that, has that changed or... ?**

No. No. You just get your thigh boots, 'same. There were all Dunlops, but now they're Dunlop but now made... as far as I know, they're made in India. They're more of a plasticity type rubber, I don't know what they are exactly. Mm. And oilskins. They're all plastic now. Mm.

**And what did they used to be? Were they made out of something... ?**

They were thick and heavy, like, yeah. They were actually oiled: coats that were made out of oil. And then they got onto plastic. It's all plastic stuff nowadays.

**And where do you buy it from now?**



Mine now, if I want an oil, I'd have to probably ring a firm up called Gael Force, which is a Scottish firm. Inverness, their main depot is. Hm.

### **Track 3**

There was this fella, he had some nets set just down from 'viaduct, up Ulverston viaduct. And he used to go out from Sand Gate and go and fish with horse and cart and come back. And he'd a fella used to go with him, but he wasn't a fisherman, he was just a fella out of work. Anyhow, fisherman was took badly, he got pneumonia or summat. He couldn't go. So he said to this fella, "Will you go and fish me nets for us? You'll have to go on your own."

Anyway, morning he got up to go out. This fisherman said to him, "Well, don't go with horse and cart. Go to t' crossings at... what we call [inaud] [00:44] crossings. Walk all the way along side o' railway line, on [pitchin' (ph) [0:49]. And then when you get to 'viaduct, all you have to do is just [pop (ph) [0:52] there" because it was foggy - did I say it was foggy? "And find 'nets and just come back 'same way."

So off this fella goes, toddling along, walking alongside o' t'banking. And he fell over a lump o' wood, picked hissel' up and off he come. Carries on toddling back. Next thing, he lands back to 'crossing again. Didn't realise he'd turned round.

### **He'd come round again? (laughs)**

[01:20]

Another little story was, up here they had what they call peat houses, and they used to keep their horses in what was basically a coal house. They made 'em into stables. And my grandfather said this fella painted all... farmers do it, even today, put a whitewash round doors.

And he said, "Bloody horse wouldn't go past. I couldn't get it in." Because it was shying at this white doorway, like. So I said, "Well, what did you do, Granddad?" "Oh", he said, he turned it round and backed it in.

**(laughs)**

[01:54]

Another story, nothing to do with fishing... My grandfather used to tell us, in them days there was a fella and basically he'd gone crackers. So his brother and his cousin were told by 'local doctor to take him to 'asylum at Lancaster on t' train. So off he goes, and gets to Lancaster, and marched him through 'streets and took him t' asylum. And they had hold of him under each arm. You know, one on each side, like that.

Knocks on 'door, fella comes. And he said, "Yes, what do you want?"

And he said, "Ee-ah, fetch these two silly buggers" and ran away (laughs).

And he said he couldn't find him anywhere. Searched Lancaster looking for him. When they got back, he was back here. He'd come back on his own (laughs).

**Brilliant.**

Well, it's nowt to do wi' fishing. I don't know whether they were fishermen or not, them, but... mm.

[02:51]

**Mm. So can you remember any other times when you were out with your granddad or your dad and summat funny happened or...  
Or summat sticks in your mind, like a day that you remembered?**

No, not really. They was all alike. No.

[03:10]

**And are there like phrases and things like erm... you know, how people would greet each other? Or things that they might say to each other in that sort of fishing world that just aren't used anymore? Can you sort of remember any of them things?**

No. You just greeted people like, you know, "How's ta' doing?"  
"How's ta' doing?"

**'Cause you mentioned there was...**

"T' alreet?"

**... a word, erm, in Flookburgh, that's used that I hadn't heard before?**

Yeah. Tarrafar. Well, it means a ginnel or a passageway through, and it's a corruption of the word 'thoroughfare'. Probably couldn't read it properly (laughs).

**And that's unique to Flookburgh?**

As far as I know it is, yeah, I've never heard it anywhere else. You don't hear it now spoken.

**And what was the word?**

Tarrafar.

**Tarrafar.**

Tarrafar. Thoroughfare. Mm.

[04:14]

**So I was just wondering then, how your involvement in the fishing trade, how it compares now to how when you first started? How is it different and how things have changed?**

What, the actual fishing? The actual fishing is basically the same. Marketing it has altered a bit. As I said, in them days, all 'cockles went on t' train into Lancashire towns. There used to be a special cockle train go on a Saturday morning out of Cark station. And you could put cockles on any passenger train that had a goods van on. You'd just go to 'station and pay a... they had a special cockle rate... pay 'clerk int' office, and put 'em ont' train. And off they would go. And now there's no guard's vans on trains. Nothing widely goes by train. There's no trains, hardly, really.

**And you... I mean, your catchment of where you send the fish is not very far away, is it? 'Cause you mentioned Young's and...**

Well, it was Young's then. And now it's down here to Clare's down here: Furness Fish and Game.

All t' cockles... all t' cockles go by lorry to... down into... well, near Swansea.

**And would you just take them down then in the tractor or the quad bike or in the car?**

These lorries come and pick 'em up. What, do you mean cockles?

Yeah, no, they've lorries come and pick 'em up. Put 'em into... tip 'em into ton bags and they just **high (ph) 'em, heb (ph) 'em [05:42]**, onto 'wagon.

**And do they pick 'em up from you here then or... ?**

Yeah, down on t' marsh, usually. Somewhere there, yeah, or on 'aerodrome.

**So they meet you after you've just...**

Mm.

**... literally after you've caught them?**

Yeah. They pick 'em up there. And sometimes we send... Well, we don't send 'em, but other people send 'em on transport to France. Mm. But mussels, no. They go by these here wagon firms. You know? They take 'em: pick 'em up and take 'em down to wherever they go in Wales.

[06:21]

**And what about the price then? The prices? How have they changed? Because obviously they'll change with inflation and with, you know, generally lifestyle and how things sort of progress. But, you know, how have the prices of fish change?**

Cockles... we get good money for cockles. If you can get some good big cockles, you can get some good money for 'em. But as I say, shrimps haven't gone up in comparison to what I don't think they should've done. They should've been worth a lot more than what they are now. The amount of work that's in 'em, peeling 'em and that.

But we had... well, last few years, we've had Dutch imports coming in, which are peeled by machine. Which I don't think they taste as good, 'cause when they're being peeled by machine, there's water running through 'em and it washes 'flavour off 'em. But they can put them into this £7 a pan, and we're trying to get 10. And they just don't want to pay us £10. Last few years, we've struggled to sell 'em.

But this year, I don't know why, the Dutch shrimps have gone very dear. Why, I don't know. So they're glad to get a few off us now. All swings and roundabouts.

**Mm. So... so you said... so how much per... so how does it work then? Is it per pound? Per bag? How is it... how do you price up, like?**

What, to sell to wholesalers? Yeah, we get about £10 a pound. Mm.

**And do you put 'em in like Hessian sacks or... ?**

No. No, they're peeled, they have to be peeled and then weigh 'em into polythene bags. 2 pound in a bag.

**They're the shrimps. And then the cockles...**

Cockles go in... we call 'em onion bags, you know. Nets. Bag 'em up into them. 25 kilos. Yeah.

**And so how much are they worth then? Just roughly.**

Well, cockles can vary. A good cockle nowadays will be worth £1000 a ton. Mm.

**And shrimps?**

Shrimps are, as I say, £10 a pound, peeled.

**And what about mussels?**

Mussels vary. They're roughly round about £400 a ton.

[08:35]

**And you've never done any salmon fishing?**

Yes, I've done a bit of that, yes.

**You've done a bit of that?**

Mm.

**What, just... what, to keep your...**

Just to... when there was salmon. We did a bit of salmon when there was salmon. They've practically gone out of date, has salmon, out of existence. I give my licence up quite a lot of years ago because you were getting none. Me son, he kept his on, and the last two years, he hasn't took it, 'cause there's no salmon. I think they should be trying to get some stock into 'rivers, but that's up to them, in't it? The river authorities.

**Mm. And so how would you fish for the salmon then?**

Legally we're allowed to use what they call a lave net, which is basically a little landing net. You stand on what you call a **bar (ph) [09:34]** int' river, and as the fish come down, they come onto the **bar (ph) [09:38]**, which is shallow in. And then they turn and go back up, and then you see it. It'll either run up or make a

splash or summat. And you just run out and hopefully catch it in your haaf net. Or your lave net rather, I should say. That's a lave net.

**'Cause a haaf net and a lave net is different?**

Yeah, yeah. Haaf net is a big thing, width of a gate. And you stand int' river with it until salmon comes down and touches it and then they hup (ph) [10:07] it up.

**So that's the legal way?**

Them's the legal ways.

**(Laughs). There's various other means.**

[10:15]

**So when... oh, I was going to ask about the... so when you were talking about the shrimping and erm... 'cause the biggest difference over Morecambe and Flookburgh, the different sides of the bay, is when the shrimps are boiled. 'Cause they're boiled on the boat.**

They boil on the boat, we boil on land. Mm.

**So where's your boiler then? Have you got it here in your house?**

No. We have a boil house over 'bridge there. Mm.

**And do you bring the shrimps then back to the boiler house as soon as you catch 'em?**



Yeah, yeah. You have to get 'em into 'boiler before they die. Hot weather's no good, because if they die, they go white and dead and then they won't peel. You have to be... This weather's grand 'cause it's cooler. On a boat, it doesn't matter. You can pop 'em straight into 'boiler. People have tried several methods of trying to keep 'em alive and one thing and another, but we can't really manage a boiler ont' tractor so well so... But it's... when it's warmer through the day, we can usually get out early morning and get back before 'sun gets a bit of power in it, and get 'em into 'boiler.

[11:30]

**And June pots her own shrimps, doesn't she?**

She pots a few, yeah.

**So has she got like a secret recipe?**

Well, there's nothing secret about it, yeah (laughs).

**(Laughs) It's something we're very coy about, the recipe used to...**

No.

**Is it just a few spices and butter?**

A few spices, er... Yeah, a bit o' nutmeg, a bit o' cayenne pepper and... bit o' salt and...

**I can ask June what the...**

You'll have to ask her for' recipe, yeah.

**Yeah.**

[11:59]

**So when you look back then on, you know, the Wilson family and your generation, and generations that have gone before you, how does it make you feel? Are you proud to be part of a fishing family or... ?**

Oh, yes. Yes. Mm.

**And what would you like to be remembered for, I guess?**

I don't know really (laughs). Are you ever remembered, really? Once you've gone, you're gone, aren't you, like?

**Well, I guess... you know, there's obviously Michael, your son.**

Yeah.

[12:32]

**But you know, how far do you think the Wilson fishing generation will continue?**

I don't know. I honestly don't know. I can't really see it going past his generation. I don't think so. It might do but I can't... Cockling might go on, but shrimping's... You know. And picking's dying out. People don't want to do it now. You've a job to get people to peel shrimps so...

[13:00]

**So you've got June, who helps to peel. Have you got other pickers as well?**

Yeah, we've a few other pickers. June's cousin comes, another woman comes. We take one or two out to people to be peeled at their houses. Mm.

**Ah, so you do kind of uphold that tradition of ladies sitting round a table?**

Yeah, yeah. We take some down to 'factory to be peeled by machine, but you're not getting very much for 'em. Price isn't... Unless you're getting a lot of shrimps easy, quick and easy, price is not good enough.

[13:30]

**And what are your hopes for the future then of fishing on Morecambe Bay?**

Well, I hope it would carry on. But whether it will or not, I don't... As I say, I think cockling will, as long as there are cockles, because anyone can dart... All you need is to get a quad and dart out and get a few cockles. Anybody can do that. You don't need a base, like, to work from. If you're shrimping, you need a boiler house and fridges and all that tackle, like. But with cockling, you can just come and go when there is cockles to get, like, can't you?

[13:57]

**And have you yourself got like a preference? What you prefer doing?**

No, no. Just take it as is. Luckily you get a change from jobs. You know, musseling or cockling. Then you go shrimping. I think I like shrimping best really. Yeah.

**Why's that then?**

Well, there's always that expectation of what's gonna be int' nets when you pull 'em out, like.

**How much you're gonna get?**

How big they are, how many and all that, like, yeah.

**Have you ever surprised yourself with how much you've caught in one sitting?**

Oh, yeah. Yeah, once or twice.

**Can you remember then, anything?**

I once went and had a do down one side o' channel, then I crossed it and went down 'other side, and I got roughly 400 weight of shrimps.

**Wow.**

That's int' shell. Not peeled, but int' shell. That's quite good.

**Did you think you'd hit the jackpot?**

That's quite good is that. Good enough for me, anyhow. Mm.

**Great stuff.**

If you can get what you call a boiler full, which is about 100 pound int' shell, you're doing... that's quite nice. Yeah, it's alright, yeah. Or two boiler full's even better. But four boilers is a lot. Mm.

[15:06]

**And are you happy to have been born and grew up and live in Flookburgh?**

Oh, yeah, yeah.

**What makes it special to you then?**

Well, it was, as I say, all relations, but they've died out and there isn't many left here, you know. Flookburgh's not what Flookburgh was. No. Mind you, people say that about all the villages, don't they?

**Mm.**

Mm.

[15:36]

**And what's it like then? Just tell me what it's like to be out there in the bay and so... you know, 'cause I've never had that opportunity. What's it like to just be out there and... ?**

Well, you can go and you can look all round and see all round and nobody to bother you. You can do as you like. Mm.

[15:54]

**And if you hadn't have been a fisherman, what do you think you would've ended up doing?**

I've no idea what I'd have done. I don't know. I've never desired to do anything else, so I don't know what I would've done.

**What was it then, do you think, that drove you, like, as a young boy?**

I don't know. As they say, it's bred in you. Yeah. Probably. I don't know, it must have been (laughs). Yeah.

**Lovely. Thank you so much. Is there anything else that you'd like to share?**

I don't think so.

**It's been really, really good, thank you.**

I just hope it was some good to you.

**Thank you very much, John.**

An old man talking a load of rubbish (laughs).