



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

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW**

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**FRONTSHEET**

INTERVIEW NO: H2H2016.22  
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: Iris Birks  
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1935  
INTERVIEWER/S: Jon Randall and Mandy Bannon  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 2/08/16  
LOCATION: Lancaster  
TRANSCRIBER: Jane Firth

**Summary of Interview:**

**No of Tracks: 1**

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

Track 1: (Iris Birks life at Sunderland Point) Brief description of track content: Iris Birks family, neighbours and occupations: Life as fisherman: Geographical and occupational lineage: Early childhood memories; pass-times; relationships; hobbies, leisure activities, school: Navigating the tides: Weather and tidal flooding: Wartime: Part-time Job at Overton Blacksmiths: Summer holidays and salmon fishing: Fixing the salmon nets: Shrimping: Fishing mussels: Father's livelihood and survival: Iris's role in fishing at Sunderland: The boats-type and names: Geographical area boats travelled: Safety: childhood feelings: Iris's own

boat: Keb fishing: Iris's present pastimes; cruise boat holidays versus ferry boat holidays; travel; wider life experiences: Iris's adolescence and marriage: Iris leaves Sunderland: Iris after her husband's passing: Iris' relationship with the Maritime Museum: Modern life versus old traditions: Gender divide: Effects of modern life on Iris's family and fishing community: Iris's working life: Iris's lectures and community work: Planned memorial to Iris's family: Shrimping; season; tools; process: Uncle Harold's role as boat pilot: Peggy: Iris's present relationship with Sunderland Point.

### **Interviewer 1**

**OK... Emm, yes so Iris, initially yeh em, could you tell me your full name and your date of birth and your place of birth as-well?**

Interviewee

Yes, It's mmm, my maiden name was Iris Townley but I'm called Iris Birks now and my mmm... I was born on the 22nd of the second, 1935 at Sunderland Point.

**Ah ha... and could you... could you tell me about your... your parent's, your parent's full names and also your... your grandparent's full names on both sides?**

I well like, I can remember my grandad's name; William Arnold, and mi grandma's name was emm ...Margaret I think, but I'm not sure about that, and me mother's name was Jessie and me dad's name was Arn...William Arnold, same as his gra...his fathers, so...err that's who us born with. I 'ave one sister that I don't get on with.

**Emm what was... the... what were your... what were your parent's occupations?**

My mother didn't work but my father was a fisherman at Sunderland Point.

**And was his father as-well?**

Yes, yes.

**So do you, do you have, could you tell me about how long you know fishing to have been in the family for?**

Oh I would say fur... about two or three generations it's been a Townley in the fishing and then when me, my father 'ad two daughters well it kind of, the Townley, the Townleys just went then it did; yeh my uncle Hubert ad a son but he went to be a teacher down Birmingham -way...so there was no fishin' after Townleys...after their days.

**And I heard that you're your cousin Harold was [inaud], can you tell me about him?**

Yes, yes, well mm Harold is nine... mi cousin Harold is ninety-four next month-September and he err was a pilot for a good while at Glasson Dock and 'e used to fish with 'is brother Thomas but Thomas sadly died with em... a stroke, so I'll look at Tom a bit with 'is like... with been a pilot an' then 'is...'is em, what age it?-ninety four so he's been retired since 'e was about seventy and 'e was a fisherman at Sunderland Point. An' then we 'ad some Smiths that lived at Sunderland Point and two of those were fishermen an' one was Philip Smith an' he's been in the papers a lot 'cause he em, I don't know how many wives he 'ad but he was a bit of a rogue, so he's been dead about twenty five years now - Philip ... An' Thomas 'as had a stroke an he's eighty three now – Thomas so he

doesn't fish now, so all that generation's gone, an there's just a chap called Trevor now that fishes at Sunderland Point an 'is wife's called Margaret.

**Do you know what their surnames are?**

Owen...Owen, Trevor an' Margaret Owen an' that's the only two that fish at Sunderland Point now.

**And could, could you tell me a little about your, your earliest memory?**

I remember erm [inaud] fishing and er a used to go fishing with mi father in the boat in the summer holidays an' then I 'ad a little boat ...can yer stop it a minute?

**So yeh, if you could, yeh, just tell me a bit about what, what your earliest memory is?**

When a was ten years old I got a boat off my father an' I used to go fishing for flukes an' eels an' I'd sell them for pocket money an' then err ... I used to go in the school holidays to Glasson Dock rowing, a was only ten years old don't forget, an a used to go wi sixpence in mi pocket to Glasson Dock to get an ice-cream an come back again, but all summer holidays a was in mi boat fishin' for flukes an eels... (laughs)...I remember that yes.

**Lovely...You said you started to go out fishing with yer father, what was, what was your relationship with your father like?**

Em, we went salmon fishing in the summer holidays, we used to be out for six hours at a time, yeh. We'd come back and... but there was quite a bit of salmon about in those days, so that was alright (laughs).

**And why did your family decide to move to Sunderland Point?**

Well my father was born at Sunderland Point and her...mi mother came from Manchester so... the' was surprised really cos she was a very educated lady but err... she'd lost her mother so she came to Sunderland Point cos her step father lived there and her... she met my father an she 'ad a lot o' very 'appy years but they 'ad to move to Heysham when she was about fifty eight mi mother; she couldn't do the road anymore, so they moved to Heysham, so by that time mi father 'ad retired from fishing ... so em ... (laughs).

**So your father came to...your father was born there?**

Yeh, yeh.

**So how far back had your family begun to live at Sunderland Point?**

1914...about ... it would be early eighteenth century cos my father was born in 1899 so it would be very early on, goin' back [inaud] a couple o' centuries anyway. Ma grandad were ...'ad err five boys an' three girls and they all left Sunderland Point except two of them which is mi Uncle Hubert an mi father...so 'ave got cousins all over what a didn't know about...ye.

**And what was it like living there as a child?**

Oh it... wonderful! Wonderful! living at Sunderland Point an' that an er...a used to eh say... go fishing an' a used to climb up the cotton tree at Sunderland Point an' a got stuck up there one day an' ma father made mi stay up there all day he did. (laughs) up on the cotton tree. Err oh an' then a used to take people to Sambo's grave an I used to charge them a penny to show them from the top o' the lane but if I took them I 'ad t' get sixpence off them so...that was you know when a was a young child...Oh it was wonderful, it was really...ye'.

**And did you have any other leisure activities that you did when you were there?**

Erm just (clears throat) in the winter wi played snooker an' darts an' whist ... in the winter we did an' wi used t' play cricket as well...played a lot of cricket in the summer.

**Would it be alright to put the paper down?**

Oh sorry.

**Ye, so...an...and what em ...what other...what was it...what was it like being there as a child and your relationship with other children there? Were there other children who lived there besides your family?**

Emm, there was em four Smith boys lived next door and er most o 'em 'ad little boats like me but my sister never 'ad a boat, she wasn't interested but erm I never left Sunderland Point to go anywhere, just stopped at Sunderland Point all the time. And a say a didn't 'ave any boyfriends because em they wouldn't take me back across the marsh an' a just wanted, mi boat was mi gentleman friend (laughs), mi boat so the...it was absolutely great living there! It were...we used to play pirates in the boats as-well...with each other and err... we used to go kind o' fishin' for crabs as-well so crabs we used to get for fishin ...but every day was just fun and something to do but err ...you don't get the weather now like yer used to, yer used t' 'ave lovely weather for the summer holidays, an' so peaceful over there as-well.

**And what was your schooling experience like then?**

Not so good (laughs), 'cause we didn't go if the weather was very very bad we didn't, and erm, when I went to the big school at Morecambe, I went there when

a was eleven; I 'ad to go in the kind of next to the bottom class cos I 'hadn't 'ad much schooling. As I say I've taught mi self a lot by now...so em...But some days we didn't go to school at all, and then the war was on... so err... if an army wagon came we couldn't get a lift with the army people in case... erm... a German plane came over and it attacked; the plane, so em the what do you call it, the army lorry, so we were never allowed to 'ave a lift, we 'ad t' walk it. An' then many a time we were up at six 'o'clock in t' morning to get across the marshes an' coming back sometimes about seven 'o' clock, six 'o' clock at night and sometimes you would be up to yer waist in water yer would, an er 'ave 'ad a few near misses but am still 'ere, and erm, 'ave no arthritis at all, a think that's what salt water does to yer. But it wasn't very good goin' t' school in the dark an' then on t' work very early morning. An' then err, the was a blacksmiths at Overton when a went to erm...where was it at now...to school at Morecambe...just stop a minute while that went by...and err any way at this em Blacksmiths a knew where the key was in a morning if a went early... got the key out, an' a got 'is err fire goin' for 'im an' that, a put 'is rods in, so when he came in about eight 'o' clock the rods were ready, an' I used to get over the end [inaud] an' he used to go bang, bang, bang to make 'is shoes fur the horses...so 'ave all that, those memories of that I 'ave, that was good, ye, so em...

**And you talked a lot about the different types of weather at Sunderland Point. So how did those weather conditions and the seasons, how did they impact on living there?**

Well, you always knew when the weather was going to get very, very bad 'cause of the winds and everything, so we used to move our furniture up onto the next level an' that, so they 'ave, what d' ye call it now, some kind o' boulders to 'elp them but in my days we didn't an' we 'ad t' move the furniture upstairs but it was very, very windy an' very cold in the winter an we got a lot o' wind we did, an' it wasn't very good going' t' school. My father used t' meet mi, and err, we used t' put ropes round us so we wouldn't fly down into the [inaud]...down there, but the

weather was, yer know...we didn't 'ave a lot of snow, didn't 'ave a lot of snow, no, so it wasn't too good. But anyway 'ave weathered it to eighty-one (laughs).

**And you said that you had to move the furniture up-stairs so were you ever flooded?**

Yes, downstairs, yeh.

**And how did that come about?**

Well mi father knew when we were goin' t' get very high winds and it was full tide, yes, he knew, yes.

A wonder if ye better stop it a bit while a get another drink o' water?

**So, so Iris you were telling us about the experience of being flooded and your father would tie ropes around you and your sister so tell me about why he did that?**

Yes, yes, well, if you go across Sunderland Point marshes the winds get absolutely terrific; well I was only a small child, I was only four foot about, when a was going' t' school, so any bit o' wind, a wud just float away so 'e 'ad t' put err ropes round us, then 'e used t' meet us on those cold days 'e did, ye', an' then when we got a bit bigger and we're managing on our own 'e used to 'ave a flashlight and 'I'd put this flashlight on an 'id keep picking it on an off to make sure the tide was coming an' you 'ad t' hurry up, well my little legs, mi little legs were going' fur a don't know what t' get before the tide came over, so I 'ad a few near squeeks like, ye'.

**And how often would the tide come in then?**



Twice a day, the tide comes in twice a day, and it alters an hour every day...twice a day. So as a say we got home late o' sometimes early, but it was hard going' in winter, very hard...goin'.

**And you were saying in summers you would go on holidays with your father and, and, and fish for salmon and so on?**

At Sunderland Point, a never left Sunderland Point in the holidays, never left of us, at home for a month an' never went anywhere (laughs).

**So how would you fish for salmon then?**

Mi father 'ad a net, em, I used to help him thread the needles, it was like em, kind of a... nets what ya put at the back of a boat an yer drag it along an' the salmon go into it...salmon. There's about five or six boats in those days but there's only one now, what Trevor Owen 'as, an it's a very small fishin' from May till August an then it finishes, so mi father used t' go musseling after that, an shrimping, yeh we used to go shrimping an I used to pick shrimps fur six-pence a jam jar in the winter...six-pence a jam jar...that's only what a got, so, but I still enjoyed it cos it was fishin'.

**And would you go out and do the mussels as-well?**

I, I didn't' go muss..., there on the mussel bed, there were, there was big mussel bed in those days so mi father an' is brother used t' go for the mussels but I never went musseling...cos the weather was getting colder in September an' October. An' then 'e used t' do a bit of gardening fur some people t' get a bit o' extra money, an 'e used t' go rabbit shooting, anything t' get a bit o' extra, cos with the fishin' season being so short...yes - May till August; it's not very long...ye know.

**So yeh that was em interesting to find out as-well. So was fishing your father's main livelihood or were there other things as-well?**

Fishin', just fishin', fishin' really. That's only what he was brought up to do...yeh.

**And who was he brought up by, his father?**

Father, yes, that's right, yes, yeh.

**And can you remember how you felt when your father first asked you to come out in the boat with him and fish?**

No em...it's err... a long, long while ago but a used t', he used to take me out about once a week cos we thought that was long enough for me cos six hours in a boat they thought it would be enough, so in the summer holidays it was just once a week... accordin' t' the tides like, accordin' t' the tides, cos I wasn't gonna go out at night time with 'im.

**And you said, you said that you helped him to fix the nets...?**

Oh yes, in winter we err made new nets an I used to thread the needles...the big long needles they' were.

**So what does thread the needles mean?**

Yeh, I don't think I've got it on...(laughs)

**Can you describe them for me?**

They're like a fork really, with a head to it an' yer put all the... you wind it round an round, an mi dad used to go like in an' out, an' in an' out making a net. So I made 'is nets in the winter an' I helped thread the needles for 'im... in the winter.

**And was there, you talked about that process where you hung the net out the back of the boat to catch salmon. Was there any other methods or techniques that you used to fish?**

No, not for salmon fishin' with them boats cos there's no engines to the boats, the' just rowed em, there's no engines at all...not like there is today (laughs).

**Yeh so, did the way that people fished change over the time that you were out at Sunderland Point?**

No, no, it was just the same...the net out o' the back o' the boat.

**Interviewer 2: How far out from Sunderland Point would you go looking for the Salmon?**

Well, we used to go out into the Irish Sea a good way, out into the Irish Sea.

**A mile or more?**

No, two o' three miles out, yes...but it were a six hour journey, going t' coming out...coming back, yes, six hours, yeh...so it was quite a long day. See my father went in the war as-well an' they 'ad to wear steel helmets cos we 'ad a camp at Sunderland Point cos of all the spare ground an' err 'e used to 'ave to wear this helmet cos of anything could 'appen out in the sea like.

**Interviewer 1: Were you, were you ever scared of going out then?**

No, no, never scared o' water, not in mi own boat even (laughs), a used t' ...we 'ad to follow these buoys t' go t' Glasson Dock, we 'ad but erm...comin' back one day it came very foggy but a knew where I was at with mi instruments told mi, that, so a didn't' worry, no... never frightened at all, no.

**So did you ever, did you ever swim as-well?**

A can't swim, nobody could (laughs), nobody could swim on the Point an' if... if I go on holiday a won't go in the baths but I would go in the sea; but not the baths, I never go t' the baths, so jus' the sea what I go to.

**Do you know why it was that no-one who could swim then?**

I don't think anybody ever... none of them could swim! None of the Smith brothers or mi cousin Harold; he couldn't swim, mi cousin Thomas couldn't swim, none of us swam, our parent's didn' swim! A don' know why that was; but none of us... an' I still can't swim today, but am still 'ere (laughs).

**And you talked a little bit earlier about getting your own boat when you were...ten?**

Ten, yes.

**So how did you feel when you were given your first boat?**

Oohh wonderful! An a called it... em see now, Mahooligan, Mahooligan a called it, but em, it's only this last two or three years it's gone for fire wood; it was the oldest boat in Sunderland Point an' they 'ad to do away with it... But it was quite a big boat fur me on mi own but I managed it... It was wonderful it was, really!

**Why did you call it Mahooligan?**

That was the name before I christened it from my...when mi father gave it to me it was Mahooligan, so it was that ever since (laughs).

**And how would you... how would..., were you sailing on it or....?**

No, no, just rowing, just rowing.

**And did you have to do any maintenance on it at all?**

No, not really, no, in the winter mi father would just paint it up a bit, in the... but em, it was a good solid wood in those days, made o' solid wood.

**And where would you take it?**

Just tha...we used to moor it on... between the first terrace an' the second terrace and then err in the winter we just left it where it was wi' it's moorings... we did, we didn' really move it anywhere; an' then it went into one o' the chap's houses when I I left Sunderland Point an it's bin there ever since till it rotted away.

**Can you describe how it looked when you first got it?**

Erm...well it wasn't as big as ma dad...ma fathers fishing boat by a long way...I think 'ave got a picture of it somewhere but I can't think where at the moment... Oh wait a minute, there's one picture on there, can you stop it a minute?

**So yeh Iris, we've talked, err yeh, a bit about your boat so...and one of the things you did now was keb fishing?**

Keb fishing; It's a square piece of iron with legs on it to sink it and err, there's a line to it an' you put your crabs on these... your hooks an' you put these crabs on an you throw it over the boat, like that, an then if you've got a bite it kind o' twitches in your 'and, so you know to pull it up then, an' you've either got an eel or you've got a flattie, an you've got some more crabs, an err, I used to get a lot of flatties that way which are used to sell...those are did yeh...so em, that's what a Keb is, that's what a Keb is...yes, yeh...

**And can you remember any other fishing terms that you would use for things?**

No I erm ... I 'ad a fishing rod which a used t' take down when the tide was coming up, but a didn' catch as much that way cos I wasn't far enough out so a needed the boat to get most o' the fish...a did...yeh.

**And how far out would you have to go to catch fish?**

Err, only about err five minutes that's all; five minutes; in the Lune, yeh. I used t' go get in mi boat as the tide was coming in; fish fur about three hours altogether then the tide started t' go out, I used t' come back in then because there's a lot o' currents on the Lune an ye 'ave t' know what you're doin' else if you didn't you wouldn't be able t' row back t' your moorings; so I knew instant what t' do, so that's why I never drowned really (laughs).

**How does it feel to travel by boat as opposed to on land for you?**

Can you stop a minute cos I don't...

Erm, I love boats an' that. I'll go anywhere in the world on a boat but I don't like flying...but erm... I like goin' to erm boat museums an' that, I belong Lancaster Museum an' we 'ave a lot of little trips out we do; to boat museums, and erm...'ave done quite a bit o' cruising but it's alright cruising but there's nothing t'

do much on a cruising ship so I prefer travelling on these ferry boats. I've just been up t' the Orkneys an' Shetlands this last month and err, it was lovely goin' on these ferry boats, jumping off one, getting up early in a morning, jumping on t' another, an' coming back; an' it was a wonderful holiday. That was with Bibby's of Ingleton; 'ave just got back from there but that's ma kind of a holiday, on ferry boats. An' then I went on another ferry boat to Greece and err, we went to all these little erm kind of...it was a working ferry boat so we went to all these, like...not Corfu... little places up in Greece; I can't remember all their names now but erm, that was a wonderful holiday that was, goin' sat on the top deck an' watching 'em dropping the vegetables off an' the fish off an', that was really lovely, that holiday.

**Yeh, It's nice to hear about that, yeh.**

Yeh, yeh.

**So, when did you leave Sunderland Point then?**

I was twenty-one years old in 1956 and went to Heysham (coughs). And then em, oh a got married before then an' came t' live in Lancaster but em 'ave been a widow twenty five years now an' 'ave been a big walker, 'ave walked in Switzerland up the mountains across, Austria up the all over the world 'ave walked really but 'ave 'ad t' come downhill these days, so 'ave done a lot of big walking, I'm an outdoor person, I don't like being in I don't, ...so em...as a say a can tell you many a story about up the mountains and Switzerland; 'ave 'ad a wonderful life even since mi husband's died!...ye. My husband didn't like Sunderland Point though 'e didn't, frightened o' the...he wasn't in...into water like me.

**Why was he afraid?**

He was a miner; he'd been an ex-miner. He was a miner in South Yorkshire an er... when 'is divorce came through he came to live with his sister at Morecambe. I was 'is second wife 'cos I was interested in err... outdoor life. But we used t' go err...coarse fishing then, a used to do a bit o' c.... but I really liked...what yer call...sea fishing was my favourite...it was.

**So yeh Iris, you were talking a little bit about when you left Sunderland Point. Why did your family move from Sunderland Point?**

My mother couldn't do the road anymore so we 'ad t' move...to Heysham, we moved to Heysham. Then I met my husband at Heysham 'a did, well 'e...I talked about that a bit earlier on (clears throat) ... But I missed it though, I missed Sunderland Point something terrible, I still do today. But I used to go hay making an' helping with the tractors an' the horses an' that in the summer holidays; that was good fun it was, helping with the hay. An' then in the winter we 'ad of course erm whist an' snooker an' billiards an' darts an that in the w... ooh an' stamp collecting, a forgot to mention that; 'ave got a huge stamp collection 'ave got 'cos we used t' swap stamps about once a month, we always 'ad stamps, so 'ave saved those fur a lot o' years, stamps; that was another hobby what I 'ad. An' I was a good whist player.

**So it sounds like life changed quite a bit when you moved away?**

Away, Yeh it did, it did, I didn't care for it at all; but then I married an' that an' I 'ad a child but he died like...in child birth so...as I say 'ave been on mi own twenty-five years this year an 'ave done a lot of climbing; holidays, 'ave travelled the world...I 'ave since...In twenty five years 'ave done a lot. Then up t' getting married 'ave done a lot...so 'ave.'ad a wonderful time!

**So what do you think of the rest of the world compared to Sunderland Point?**



Ohh mmm I'll never find another Sunderland Point... no matter where I go, I won't. No it's still my home an' if I go over there... I took a party over there about three weeks ago, an' my heart is lifted when I go up there an come back and we went to Snatchem's fur our meal after an' they want me t' do it again so it's just finding a day. They come from North Yorkshire so am seeing those next week; next Tuesday... am goin' t' visit my friends. Ave taken loads an' loads o' people over an 'ave done quite a lot o' lectures but this year I 'aven't been too well so I 'aven't done anything this year... at all; hoping a can get back to it.

**You said you missed it quite a lot. What things in-particular did you really miss?**

I missed mi village life I did and err... going out in ma boat, and err, in the evenings you always 'ad somewhere t' go an' in this little reading room an' as a say... we played cards an' whist drives an' that an' it was all so friendly but when you move to like Heysham an' Lancaster, those things go an' you've got to find other things t' do, but I did manage t' go fishing with my husband but em... it was only coarse fishing though, and we used t' go bird watching a lot with my husband, I did, but since he died I've just set off an' 'ave been like a butterfly an' never stopped... since he... (laughs).

**Interviewer 2: You mentioned a reading room at Sunderland Point and that you had all these activities. Somebody we interviewed mentioned weight lifting?**

Oh yes, we 'ad weight lifting but it wasn't in the reading room, it was in the farm buildings at the back; they're flats now an' that's where we 'ad weight lifting, there we you used to do weight lifting...quite a bit.

**What sort of age would you have been then?**

Oh about twelve, thirteen, up to... I left err...twenty one when I left Sunderland Point so I would be in my teenage age as you would say.

**So how many people would there be on Sunderland Point about that time?**

There would 'ave been five of us I think there would be, the Smith boys an' me, yeh five of us, cos mi sister never joined in anything she didn't, no.

**So there was quite an interest in keeping fit and healthy?**

Yes! Oh yes, that's right yes, a think that's why I'm so healthy today up till this year (laughs); a think 'ave done a bit too much (laughs).

**Interviewer 1: And how would you compare the community then at Sunderland Point to when you moved to Heysham?**

Well err, at Heysham, not much going on really an' a missed all mi friends really I did, yeh. But then a started courting and then err...what you call it err, you forget a bit more about Sunderland then. But when he died though I got back an' a thought, am goin' t' do something with mi life, an' that's why I decided t' do these lectures an' that. An a made a bit o' money for the Maritime Museum an' a say I'm a member now, am just hoping they're not going t' close it! I'll be very, very upset if the' do because my ancestors are in there...(laughs)...Yeh my ancestors are in the Maritime Museum. Mi Grandma's sewing machines in there as-well so I love going to the Maritime.

**Why do you think it's important to preserve that information, that history?**

A don't just get that question.

**Yes, you said there's been a lot of your ancestors at the Maritime Museum and so on and at the beginning of when we started chatting you mentioned some of the other fishing families there so what were your family connections with the other fishing families?**

Well there was mi Uncle Hubert used to go fishing with mi father. There was err Mr. Tom Smith an' his sons used t' go fishing. But going back there's mi Great Uncle Arthur; there's a picture of 'im in the museum, and my Uncle Tom; he's in the museum on a picture, so those two are on one o' the big pictures. An' then there's the boat Peggy; well that belonged to the gardeners who were my cousins, cos they were going back a lot o' years. Harold's father was erm...what yer call it...a pilot and before 'im 'is Uncle was a pilot; so pilots bin in the Gardner family until up t' about twenty years ago... so em ...yeh pilots.

**And just remind us again what the fishing community's like there now?**

Well there's 'hardly any fishing there now but there was quite a lot when I was young but there's only one goes out now; Mr.Trevor Owen.

**Why do you think that's changed in modern times?**

Well there's nobody left at Sunderland to take it over cos everybody 'ad err... girls or daughters an mi cousin Harold 'ad daughters so 'e couldn't yer know...full stop; they lived down in Gloucester, so all these girls were being born so it kind o' drifted away. And then the Smith family; they were doomed with bad health so they didn't carry on.

**So it was very much a family trade and a family tradition?**

Oh yes, yes, all the lot, yes, yes.

**And you talked a lot about ...they had a lot of daughters and so on, so was there a bit of a gender divide in just men just going out to fish then?**

Well once the err... Harold when 'e lost 'is brother Thomas, he started doing more being a pilot 'e did an Tom Smith used t' go out on 'is own; he managed to, cos 'is brother Philip died so when Thomas 'ad a stroke a few years ago well he couldn't go out anymore; he's still living by the way, an' then Harold got too old at ninety two and err Edward... mi dad's brother Edward; 'e was a teacher an then course my dad 'ad two girls an err, mi cousin Harold 'ad two girls so there's no body t' carry on now, an I don't think there's many salmon about these days like there used t' be...there isn't...

**So you said you used to sell bits of fish for pocket money and sought. What did you start to do for work when you started?**

Oh I 'aven't mentioned that. I went to work in an office called Radio Rentals at err... Morecambe an' a worked there for ten years till...then I 'ad mi child an then I was made redundant an a lost mi child, and then I went to Lancaster an a worked in an office there an' a worked up t' doing wages, but doing wages there was no computers those days an' yer 'ad t' do them by hand, all the income tax an' everything yer 'ad to do it in yer head and I thought... I 'ad no schooling but I could manage; am very good at figures I am...yeh...so that's what a...always office work, that's always what 'ave done.

**And what made you decide to do your lectures on Sunderland Point?**

Erm...well when I was erm... made a widow, yer 'ave a lot o' time on yer hands, an' people used to ask me about Sunderland Point an' that ...an a thought t' mi-self one day, I think I'll get all my things together an' do lectures an err... cos I belong to U3A [University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age] in Lancaster I do, and this U3A - I should 'ave done a walk last year but it poured down an' 'ave not bin well enough

t' do one this year, so people are missing me not going over doing them...cos we used to walk on the back shore; we used t' go down to Middleton Sands an' walk on the back shore around Sunderland an' back again, but 'course a can't do that now. But I do like doing lectures an' if they give mi some money I like givin' it t' the museum, so... but this year I 'aven't done any with being ill an' like, but I love doing it... an' a bit o' charity fur people as-well.

**So how do you summarise your relationship with Sunderland Point now then?**

Well Sunderland Point is my home, it will always be my home! And 'ave got one or two friends that still live out there who I visit. But after my days I'll err...ooh 'am goin' t' have a form put there in memory of my name, when I die... After my days am goin' t' 'ave a...there goin' t' put a form up fur me; Iris, in the name of Townley, an it's goin' t' be put on the shore near Sambo's, that's where I hope they put it, an' erm, my ashes are goin' t' be put there as-well...so I'll always be at Sunderland which err...I think...I can't get it out o' mi system really! But I know I can't live there now 'cos 'am too old to live there now, but 'ave 'ad a wonderful, wonderful time... living at Sunderland Point! (laughs).

**What's your happiest memory from there?**

Oh out in the boat fishing! Out in the boat fishing...yeh...good... yeh...

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

**Interviewer 2: Erm, I'm interested in... you mentioned shrimping so I'm quite interested in the process, what it was like and what sorts of tools you used, so can you tell me a bit about that Iris please?**

Yes, erm mi father used to go out shrimping an' mi cousin did as-well, Harold Gardner used to go out shrimping, and the' used t' go out with little nets and that, an' they'd bring them in an they're all grey then an they'd take them to they have a boiler. My mum used to wash in the boiler in the week but she'd go at weekends an' 'ave t' clean it out because in the week the' used t' put the shrimps in. But they riddled 'em first an' then put them in, an' the' were pink when they came out...an' the' put onto a table an' you've got to pick 'em, so... it's not an easy job picking 'em; I got sixpence a jam-jar for them ...an then after that mi father would pot some for us... an take them to Morecambe I think 'e would, am not quite sure about that though.

**When you say 'pot' do you mean as in the recipe with the butter and...? Can you remember what went into the pot?**

No, not really, no I can't no, no...I can't, (laughs) no...

**Were there pots for the family to use?**

Yes, yes.

**And would you sell the rest?**

Yes, yes that's right, yes. Well a lot of people at Sunderland Point bought them yer know. So maybe they didn't take them t' Morecambe, 'am not sure...about that, it's going back too long really.

**Did you say the period of shrimping was just a month maybe?**

Yeh, just over a month yeh, that's all, an' at the back end, then the' used t' do the mussels in-between.

**So shrimping was October?**

October; say September October, yeh, shrimping. Then they'd do a bit o' musseling in the winter...the' would. 'Cos it was 'ard making a living out o' Sunderland though really.

**Interviewer One: What were the main challenges then in making a living?**

Just the fishing and then the...musseling and erm...I'm trying to think what else...shrimping and then erm...the' used t' do a bit o' gardening fur people; the fisherman but er, the' didn't make big money though; the' never did, no, 'cause mi dad used t' go rabbit shooting t' make a bit more money for us. We weren't brought up very poor like but err...I didn't 'ave mi first coat till I was sixteen. I used t' 'ave mi sister's coat but mi shoes were always...I always 'ad new shoes... but em... the' were just comfortable family like, you know; proper family life.

**Why would people not go further round into the Bay?**

It was too far t' go from Sunderland Point in t' the Bay, too far round t' Morecambe Bay. Takes 'em out int' the Irish Sea when you go up the Lune, goes out int' the Irish Sea so yeh...Morecambe Bay would be too far for them t' fish there; so the' only stopped at Sunderland.

**Interviewer 2: Were there any accidents or ship-wrecks because it was a very dangerous part of the coastline isn't it and your uncle was the pilot and did you experience any problems?**

No, no the' didn't seem t' do, no, but one ship what erm...goin' back a few years... erm, Great Lawrence it was called; that went missing an' it was never found again, somewhere, but the' think it was more out at sea. The Liver [inaud] or something like that the' called it, so...It's that long ago I can't remember really.

**So do you know what your uncle was responsible for doing in his role as ship pilot?**

Well if 'e got a call 'e 'ad to err go out an' that an he 'ad erm...when 'e got married he moved on t' Morecambe Road but he's a little garage at Sunderland Point an' 'e used t' sleep in there because em sometimes the' 'ad t' go out on two or three tides so instead of goin' back home 'e stopped in 'is garage; 'cause the tide comes up sometimes midnight; two or three 'o' clock in t' morning, an if 'e 'ad to pilot a boat out 'e would 'ave t' be quite nearby t' go up across t' Glasson t' pick the boat up, yeh...you know, only a rowing boat...An then the' got Peggy an' that was a motor boat that, so that took quite a bit t', yer know... There's a picture of Peggy in the museum... there is...yeh...

**So he's leading boats out of the [inaud] estuary [inaud] on the ebb tide?**

Yes, out of the Sol estuary yeh, out into the sea, yes, that's right.

**And what about...is he helping boats to come back in to the estuary again?**

Yes! Oh yes, yes, yes, go out for them in the Lune; very busy some-days.

**And what sort of boat did he have?**

'E 'ad...well this Peggy the' got later on which had an engine in it an' the' could manage it that way...the' could. It was easier when 'is brother was living 'cause the used t' take a little boat at the side, an' then when mi cousin Harold got near t' Glasson Dock the' could jump int' this little boat an' get back home quicker. But when 'e died 'e 'ad t' take the boat right up t' Glasson Dock 'e did, an' then go right back t' Sunderland...yeh. So it wasn't easy fur 'im, an' 'e's got t' ninety-two next month, I think it's the good weather that ...{laughs}.



**That's amazing! And to think that there were all these people that didn't swim, that were living and working on Sunderland Point...**

Yeh, yeh, yes that's right.

**...and there weren't any tragedies, any drownings that you can remember?**

No, no, no, none of the family got drowned, no! None of us got drowned. I don't know why but we didn't'; none of the Smith boys next door; nobody got drowned, no...no...it was good really, it was...yeh...

**It sounded like you all had a tremendous respect for the sea. You mentioned your father roping his two daughters together to get them home safely. I wonder if it was that extreme respect for the sea that has kept you safe?**

Yes, could be, could be...yes...yeh. But 'ave always felt safe by the water! ... always...yeh. I wouldn't' like t' live too far from the sea I wouldn't cause' I love it so much! I do...

But I like mi ferry boats very much now. Am goin' t' Guernsey next month! ... Goin' September; am goin' t' Guernsey...(coughs), 'cause I like those kind o' holidays! I don't like big towns, no.

**[End of tape]**