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

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## TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW



FRONTSHEET

INTERVIEW NO: H2H2017.45
INTERVIEWEE NAME/S: William Charles Butler, Derek James Butler, Janet Mary Butler.
YEAR OF BIRTH: 1948, 1952, 1950.
INTERVIEWER/S: MARION DAWSON
DATE OF INTERVIEW: 8th August 2017
LOCATION: 79 Main Street, Flookburgh LA11 7LB.
TRANSCRIBER: MARION DAWSON

### Summary of Interview:

## No of Tracks: 3

## Main Contents of Transcript (Brief Description):

Track 1: Introductions, occupations, growing up, family, father's work, starting out in fishing, techniques and equipment, farming, hawking, family history in fishing, mother's work, school, features of the sands, horses vs tractors, shrimping, whitebait, Ali and Albert Benson, accidents and incidents, community & rivalry, the best time to go to sand, navigating the sands, Tommy Benson, cockling techniques and regulations.

Track 2: More about cockling, grandfather and his mates, grandmother and mother, bombers, boats and bodies washed up on the shore.

Track 3: Discussion of jobs they had apart from fishing, life now in retirement, motorbikes and driving, future of fishing in the area, cockling regulations, migrant workers, happy memories of swimming in the sea.

## Track 1

**OK, I think that's recording now. So would you like to start by telling me your full names and where you were born and when?**

B William Charles Butler, born at 80 Main Street, Flookburgh.

D I'm Derek James Butler, born at Oubas House, Ulverston.

[00:00:31]

**And how many years are there between you?**

B 4.

D 4.

[00:00:34]

**Can I be cheeky and ask... ?**

B I'm 69 this month.

D And of course you can be cheeky (both laugh).

J That's '48 and '52.

B 1948 and 1952.

[00:00:49]

**So you were '48, Bill was... Bill, and... yeah.**

D He looks older than that, doesn't he? (laughs)

[00:00:59]

**And what's er... what's your date of birth, sorry?**

B 31/08/48. A mere youngster.

[00:01:15]

**And then yours?**

D 29/08/52.

[00:01:25]

**And what's your occupation?**

D Me? Part time fishing.

[00:01:36]

**And yours, Bill?**

B Oh, I'm retired!

D Riding motorbikes.

B (laughs) I'm retired.

[00:01:46]

**Retired from... ?**

B Chemical engineer with Glaxo.

[00:01:52]

**And were you always a part time fisherman, Derek?**

D I guess so. Always been part time.

**So what was... did you have another occupation?**

D Several (laughs).

**OK, fair enough.**

D I was at grass driers, driving tractors – grass dryer farm. I was at Glaxo for 14 years. And offshore for...

B The rest.

D 18 years, and then working abroad for 10. Or rotation abroad, but always back home.

[00:02:27]

**What about your mother's and father's occupations?**

D Fisherman and assistant.

B My dad was a fisherman and smallholder.

D Fishing, farming, market gardening was his...

J He had the hawking business, didn't he?

B And my mother just helped.

J And brought up 4 children (laughs).

B And brought up 4 children.

[00:02:52]

**Janet, can you tell us your full name and date of birth?**

J Janet Mary Butler

B 1972, wasn't it, Jan? (laughs)

J Janet Mary Butler, 11th August 1950. I was a microbiologist. And then had the family, and now retired.

[00:03:25]

**And what were your parents' occupations?**

J My father worked in Vickers Shipyard. He was an engineer on the submarines.

D And manager.

J Well, he was a manager, yeah. And my mother, she worked in... sewing curtains and...

D Seamstress.

J Seamstress, yeah, until she had the family.

[00:04:00]

**Can you start by telling me a bit about your early life growing up?**

B When I was born, I was very young (laughs). And when I was 6 months old, I went to South Africa, where my mother had come from, for... how long was it for?

D Pass. I wasn't there.

B Some months, anyway.

J 6 months?

B Some months. And I've never been back to South Africa since. Er... educated in the village, Ulverston Grammar, Leeds University. And er... Glaxo.

[00:04:37]

**What about you, Derek?**

D Well, as a young 'un I was picked on with all t' rest of 'em (laughs). So I sort of grew up, just about, int' village schools, up to Cartmel. Nearly finished Cartmel School and started work for our father. I was fishing, farming, market gardening from 14 to 18. I went to Glaxo for 14 years, 14 and a half years, and then I went offshore. Worked on offshore platforms and oil rigs for quite a while. Then I went international. Worked in Egypt, Tunisia during the war, worked in Kazakhstan, India, Trinidad...

B It wasn't the Second World War (all laugh).

[00:05:31]

**Do you have other brothers and sisters?**

D Sisters, yeah.

B 2 sisters.

**What are their names?**

B Joyce and Wendy.

**Are they married now?**

B They're married, yes.

**What are their married names? Do you mind if I... ?**

B Thompson and Smith.

**So Joyce Thompson and Wendy Smith?**

B That's it.

[00:05:51]

**Do they still live round here?**

B Joyce lives in the village, and Wendy lives at... what do you call it?

J Yealand Redmayne.

D Just short of Carnforth.

J Near Carnforth.

D Yeah.

[00:06:05]

**I should say we're in Flookburgh, I didn't say that for the tape.**

B We're in Flookburgh!

D The absolute centre of God's own little universe. And anybody that says owt else, they've got it wrong (laughs).

[00:06:16]

**So Bill, you went to South Africa age 6, did you say?**

B Months.

**I thought so, yeah. Age 6 months.**

B Yes, I remember it well (all laugh).

J That was because...

B My mother was South African. My dad met her during the war. He was Royal Navy, but he was attached to the Merchant Navy because he was on the DEMS – Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships – and he was a gunner. And he went all over the place, but they regularly called in at South Africa, which cost him dearly (all laugh).

[00:06:56]

**So when did they marry?**

B Ah...

D Pass.

B About 1947.

J Yeah. Year before you were born.

B '47. Yeah. Yeah, the year before I was born.

J May, I think.

B May? May '47? You know more than I do, but there you are!

[00:07:17]

**So they met in South Africa.**

B Yeah.

**Because your dad was in the Merchant Navy, did you say?**

B No, he was in the Royal Navy.

**The Royal Navy.**

B But attached to the Merchant, as a detached gunner.

D And mother was a Missions to Seamen Supporter. So they put on various dos for the visiting seamen. And that was it.

B Don't mumble, they won't hear you!

D Aye.

**Yeah.**

D (louder) Aye! Right.

[00:07:48]

**So your father was a fisherman before the war?**

B Yes.

**And then he joined up during the Second World War?**

B Yes. He was actually too young but joined up anyway. And it was a reserved occupation, but he joined up anyway. You know. See the world.

D They were a family business. It was fishing, farming, market gardening. With two or three cousins, and uncles, and God knows what involved. So it wasn't just fishing. He was...

B Before our generation, they were big families. And they tended to work as families.

D A unit.

B Mm.

D Mm.

B So...

D I think Grandfather had 13 in his family. And I don't know how many Grandmother had.

B How many? (laughs)

J I could go and check. About the same, I would think.

D Yes, I would say about the same.

B We've got the bloody family trees going back for donkey's years.

J About the same.

[00:08:42]

**So you mean your father had 12 brothers and sisters?**

D No. Grandfather.

B No. Grandfather.

**Ah right, yeah.**

B Father only had one brother.

D Aye.

B And he was fortunate, he got no sisters (D laughs).

[00:08:57]

**What was your uncle's name?**

B Frank. Frank Benson Butler. And he worked in the nuclear power generation.

D Started at Windscale.

B Well, he actually did his training at Vickers, Barrow. Shipbuilding. Went from there to Windscale, up the coast. And then he went down to whatever they call the one at Dursley, Gloucester. And from then he went into Wales to Wylfa and...

D I thought he went down further down south before...

B Well, he may well have done.

J He might have done, yeah.

B But he finished up at Wylfa. But he was fairly well up in the nuclear power generation situation, so he went all over the place really, but that's where he was based.

[00:09:55]

**Right. Does fishing go back in your family quite a long way?**

D Yep. I don't know how many generations but yes.

B We don't know how far back. We're still trying to find out, but our genealogist isn't up to the job (laughs).

J I'll go and check. But yes, there's fishermen all the way back.

D At least 4 generations that I know of.

J Yeah.

B According to popular rumour, and I think it's a bit more than popular rumour, Butlers came from Ireland. And it was 2 brothers. One settled here and one settled round Duddon, somewhere, was it? Somewhere round about Millom. Anyway, a bit further up the coast.

**Millom, or what was the other name?**

B The Duddon estuary. Somewhere in that area, I believe.

**The Dunn estuary?**

B Duddon.

**Duddon, right!**

[00:10:45]

D Well, I thought that one went left and one went right when they got to Liverpool.

B No.

D The one that went left got up here and the one that went right... I mean, Shaun Butler, who I met up with offshore, he claimed family sort of distant touches. And he's down in Wales.

B Well, you might be right. And Janet Mary's not here, so she's got it all in the family trees. But that doesn't go down there.

D I don't know, I don't know.

[11:18]

**So you haven't actually got that far back in your research?**

D I've never been involved in... I've got no bloody interest in it. But as I say, Shaun, one of the lads who I met offshore, he assured me that that was his

understanding that 2 brothers landed at Liverpool. One went left, one went right. And that was...

B Like I say, popular rumours (both laugh).

[00:11:43]

**What sort of time would that have been?**

D Long time ago.

B Yes, that's the nearest we can get. A long time ago! But Jan's starting to do a bit of family treeing. So one day we might know.

D Doubtful.

**Sorry?**

D Doubtful.

**But you know fishing goes back a long way in your family?**

B Oh, yes, fishing goes back a long time. But our recollections of it obviously start with our grandfather. So...

D Mm.

[00:12:16]

**Do you want to tell me a bit about him? What you remember?**

B Er... well, he was always chasing me with a stick and... (both laugh). But he couldn't catch me.

D Soldier in the First World War.

B He was... At one point he was chairman of the Parish Council and he was on the Northwest Sea Fisheries Commission.

D Yeah. Committee.

B Committee, yeah.

D Then he was down at Conwy... not Conwy... Chester. He used to go down to meetings at Chester. And some down...

B Yeah, well, various places, because I went with him as a little brat once and that was into Fylde, so that wasn't Chester. But yeah, he used to go down for t' thing and erm... Well, I'm sure he's got a lot of claims to fame, which won't come to mind immediately. But one of the things that he did on behalf of the local fishing community, he got Young's Seafood to come and put a packing plant in... well, it was at Cark, so it's a mile away from here. He was the architect of that, with somebody from Young's, and so they had a packing and freezing plant.

[00:13:28]

**What did you say his name was again, your granddad?**

B William. Just William (laughs).

**William Butler?**

B Yes.

D He was only William with Grandmother when he was int' bad books. Rest o' the time...

B He was Bill (laughs).

D He was Bill (laughs).

B Yeah, so...

D But if she called him (woman's voice) “William!” he came running.

B So he was William, my dad was William Leslie, always called Les, and I'm William Charles. And my granddad... at home my granddad was always called Bill, my dad's Les, and I was Billy. But obviously away from home, it was just Bill. But the 'y' made it different to Bill (laughs). Then we knew which one of us had to run.

[00:14:15]

**So did you see quite a lot of your granddad growing up?**

B Yes. We lived next door.

D We lived int' same back yard, aye.

B We lived next door and...

D And with it being a family business, kids were expected to...

B Work (laughs).

D Yeah. Muck the bloody cows out and feed 'em before you go to school and as soon as you get back, was my winter and... autumn and winter job. Cutting lettuce and suchlike before you go to school was another summer job (laughs). 30 dozen lettuce afore you go.

**30 dozen?**

D Aye.

B Mm. They were big greenhouses (laughs).

[00:14:55]

**What about you? Do you remember that?**

B I avoided all that.

D He was the intelligent one. He was expected to learn.

B I wasn't allowed to play (D laughs). I had to go to school – a proper school (laughs). So I did my fishing and whatever at weekends.

[00:15:14]

**So you weren't expected to help out on the smallholding?**

B Oh yeah, oh yeah. They expected you to go to grammar school and do well, and come home and work, instead of homework. But er... yeah, brilliant.

D It was educational in its own way (laughs).

[00:15:33]

**Did you enjoy it or did you resent it?**

D Most o' time. No, most o' time it was good. What better can you have, running round like a bloody idiot after cows and God knows what, in fresh air?

B Yeah. I hated school. That's where I wanted to be. All my school books... all my school books are decorated with pictures, you know, pencil drawings, of tractors. Tractors and aeroplanes. All of them. And I never listened to what was going on at school. It was always tractors, because we were going shrimping with tractors. Or ploughing, or whatever. We loved it.

[00:16:08]

When we first started... I don't know about Derek, he's younger than me, but we used to use horses and carts obviously, and I learnt my shrimping with a horse and cart. But I like mechanical things. It's one reason that I became an engineer. So I was dead keen on the tractors as well. The horses weren't fast enough. But good. More fun when you're actually there, because you're swimming around in relatively deep water with a horse, whereas with a tractor you just go down the side.

[00:16:49]

**How do you mean? Oh, OK.**

B With shrimping, you actually trawl with a net – 14 foot wide net, weighted, so it bumps along the bottom and makes the shrimps jump up in the air.

D A miniature beam trawl.

B Hm?

D A miniature beam trawl.

B Well, it *is* a beam trawl.

D It *is* a beam trawl but...

B And it's genuine, so it's not miniature.

D It's similar to what they had on the boats, but not as big. So miniature.

B So with a horse and cart, you would have one net 14 foot wide. And then when we moved onto tractors, you used a chassis.

D Mechanised it.

B An old car chassis, which was modernised, and that went into very deep water – much deeper than the horse could go. But it was on a rope, or a wire from the tractor. And the tractor would go down the side, and the chassis would go down the channel.

D Down the deep.

B It would be towing 2 nets. It had 2 arms that pulled out from the chassis, a net on each one, and they'd be about 11 or 12 foot.

D No, we went to 14.

B Eventually. But initially they were much shorter.

D Initially they didn't have enough weight to grip to take 'em out, but yeah.

B Initially they were... There was a lot of ining and outing when they first started, because the older fishermen with a 14 foot beam didn't like tractors rushing up and down with...

D 30 foot (laughs).

B You know. Making a bigger gap that's been scraped. Because basically you're going down a channel for a mile or whatever. And then you fish the net, trot back up the side with the horse and do it again. Whereas with a tractor, you just swing round and do it again. So it's like one tractor was equal to 2 horses but faster.

D 2 and a half horses. Yeah.

B So there was a bit of issue about the size of nets in the start. But nowadays you're using 14 foots now, aren't you?

D Mm.

B Yeah.

[00:18:58]

**So what age were you both when you started going shrimping?**

D Well, I give over going to school when I was 14 and that made me full time at it. It was...

**Did you start before that though?**

D Oh, yeah, aye. Christ! (laughs)

B I went shrimping when I'd be 4 years old, but just sitting in the cart.

D Int' cart, ont' front end.

B He used to sit you up on the front. The cart has a flat board at the front and you just sit on that out of the way. Your feet are outside the cart on one of the shafts down the side of the horse.

D Kicking the horse's arse (laughs).

B Well, doing all sorts to t' poor old horse, pestering the poor old horse. But erm...

[00:19:45]

I don't know whether you want memories, but I remember when I was young. Not 4 or 5, but young, sort of still in single figures, I went fishing, shrimping with my dad. I used to go with my granddad early on. But my dad. And I was sitting in the front, and we'd gone on a night time, which you don't often do. It's only certain times of the year where you get the shrimps coming to the side, and you're trawling shallower water in the dark. And we were... He was er... fishing and I was sitting on the front. And as I say, you go down the water, you're going the same way as the water so you just have to go a bit faster than the flow of the water. And when you fish the net, you actually stop and the net is easy to pull...

D Comes to you.

B Back up to the cart. And then the fisherman has to lean over and get hold of the top of the beam and lift it up onto the back of the cart, at which point the horse has to set off so that the net itself doesn't go underneath the cart and get tangled up. And all the fishermen would do is just click, you know (clicks his teeth), and horse would set off. So just as you're lifting it up, you go (clicks teeth) and horse would set off and everything's fine.

Well, I was sitting at the front, and my dad's leaning over the back, and I just went (clicks teeth) and horse set off (laughs uproariously). And he went head first off the back into waist deep water in the middle of November – night, stars out (laughs). You could hear his castanets chattering all the way home. And I wasn't er... in good order for a while.

**Do you remember that, Derek?**

D I wasn't there.

B He was still too young for that. I was only a tiddler but er...

[00:21:40]

**So he wasn't very happy about that then?**

D He was never very happy anyway (laughs).

B Well... I don't think he was very happy about it but, you know, it's called growing up.

D It's part of it.

**You said he was never very happy anyway?**

B No, 'course he was, he's joking.

[00:21:55]

**Did you have a good relationship?**

B Yes.

D Most of the time, yes.

B Well, he worked for him eventually, so he'd have to do as he was told, which always went down badly in our family.

D When they swapped over from horses to tractors, there was an early interim period where, before they started using nylon and polypropylene ropes, they used wire cables.

B Steel cables, yeah.

D That had been used usually on cranes and suchlike.

B Cranes in the dockyards. Yeah.

D And they've got a finite life for dockyards and suchlike. They're only allowed to be used so long, and the strands start breaking down. So we used to get...

B And they rip your hands.

D … the scrap, the scrap wire cables, and go with them. Well, obviously they were a lot heavier than ropes and suchlike. The other thing was that you couldn't really double them up. You couldn't... What we do nowadays, you go up the side with a short rope, so's that your tractor and chassis are only sort of 10, 15 yards apart. But in the early days, when it was wire, you had to swing it round on the full length of the wire.

B 200 metres of wire. So the tractor and the chassis.. up to 200...

D If you're doing 20 mile an hour int' tractor and turn (B laughs), it's got to take the long way round...

B And it goes a lot faster. It hits a bump, and the nets fly off! (laughs)

D And in the very early days, we hadn't worked out about tying the steering and suchlike, so the little ones used to have to sit on the chassis and steer it. Which was bloody brilliant, because you could get up towards about 70 mile an hour. But you were relying on him, the guy on the tractor, timing it right so's that you didn't hit the water at 70 mile an hour hopefully (B laughs). But more important, there were some places where there was 2, 3, 4 foot drops.

B Called a brack (ph) [00:23:53].

D  And I know he got it wrong one time. Bloody [inaud] [00:23:54] foot, I went sailing off about 50 yards or 30/40 yards short o' water, off this bloody brack (ph) [00:23:53]. Everything hit the sand at a bloody great rate o' knots. Everything went up in the air including me, and the next thing I knew I was int' tail of the bloody shrimp net being pulled into 'water! (laughs) And it had taken all the skin off the side of my face, because the nylon, or the Courlene nets, it was very harsh. And it just completely skinned my face.

B Like he said before on the wire rope, the wire rope got furry with the little...

D Yeah. You've got sharks (ph) [00:24:36].

B And they were very, very sharp. It could rip your hands to shreds.

[00:24:40]

**It got furry with what, sorry?**

D No, it's not furry, it's broken strands.

B The strands of wire.

D A rope is made up of lots of strands. Well, if you snap one strand, it tends to stick out at 90 degrees. So it sticks right into you when you're working the bloody things and it hurts.

B And the later Courlene ropes, for different reasons, they sort of shed fibres as well. And the...

D Yeah, they didn't stab you though.

B No, no. But they'd scrape your face.

D Oh, yeah. Yeah.

B Which is what you were talking about. But er... they could be quite harsh. But not ripping chunks out o' you like the old wire cables did.

[00:25:19]

**How old were you when that happened?**

B Early teens.

D I'd probably be about 11, I would guess.

B I was early teens when we really got into tractors.

D I think I was going on my own with a tractor when I was... probably be about 12 knocking 13 when I first started going on my own.

B Yeah, well, I was doing 'same, but 4 years earlier.

[00:25:45]

The thing was that... Derek's already said about living on a smallholding and so we could drive tractors and things. I learnt to drive a tractor on one of the little grey Fergies, the grey Ferguson tractors. Very small. And they didn't have footboards or anything like they have nowadays. They used to have 2 pegs sticking out of the side of the tractor that you put your feet on. And a clutch lever came back underneath that, which was just another peg, and a brake at the other side. And I learnt to drive a tractor when I was a toddler, by standing on the left hand peg, holding the steering wheel and...

D Pulling down so's he could... He'd not enough weight to... (laughs)

B This was... And I would stand on the clutch... stand on the clutch and... by the time I got big enough that I was heavy enough that a little jump and the clutch would go in, then you learnt to start the thing and put it in gear, and you would step off the clutch onto the thing and drive it. So I could drive a tractor, and learnt

to drive a tractor, without brakes, because you can't be on both sides of the tractor at the same time...

D 6 or 8 year old.

B … when I was well under 10 year old – 7 or 8 year old – just heavy enough to make it go up and down.

D I wasn't heavy enough. I had to use lift and push (laughs).

B As soon as your legs got long enough to be able to reach both pedals, then you could start sitting on the tractor. So we could drive tractors from being nippers.

[00:27:11]

**Both of you?**

D Yeah. It was expected.

B Yes.

D It wasn't anything out the ordinary. It wasn't just us, it was everybody in the bloody village

B He wasn't much above a baby... well, a little bit above a baby but not much... about as much as he is now really (D laughs), and tractors on the sand were very much in their early days. And we hadn't actually started, we were still on horses. But we were playing one Saturday morning, because my dad was away on a Saturday, he was at Kendal Market, and we weren't at school on a Saturday, so we were playing in one of our fields with the tractor. And we were practising

being shrimpers. So we had a length of rope of about 30 foot long, and a pram, a proper sprung pram. And he was sat in the pram, and I was driving the tractor...

D This was up 'back, wasn't it?

B Up the back, yeah.

D Aye.

[00:28:12]

**What do you mean, 'up the back'?**

D Where we used to live.

B Well, our house at the bottom of the hill that I pointed out. It slopes up behind that and we're in a field up there.

D Quite a biggish hill.

B And yeah...

**A big what, sorry?**

D Quite a biggish hill.

B So I'm pulling him round on his pram (laughs). As I say, not a little one. He was tucked up like a fighter pilot in the thing! And I pulled him round, and as you say, it's on a hill, so the thing starts accelerating. So I went faster, and then the rope went over the wheel of the tractor. And it sort of went round a couple of times and...

D Pulled it faster still…

B Yanked… yeah, everything was going faster until it pulled the pram out from underneath it. And he finished up like an ariel torpedo (laughs uproariously) bouncing down the field.

D Not unusual (laughs).

[00:29:02]

**Were you hurt?**

D Probably.

B He's never been the same since (laughs).

[00:29:05]

**What age were you when you did that?**

B Well, he'd be…

D 6-ish.

B 5 or 6.

D 5 or 6.

B And I'd be about 10.

[00:29:15]

**Where was your mum while this was… ?**

D Making dinner.

B Cowering in a corner (laughs).

D She was at market.

B Oh, yeah, she'd be at market! That's right.

D I'm surprised I wasn't, 'cause I used to be.

B Not at 4 or 5 year old.

D I used to sit under…

B We used to stay on a Friday night next door with our grandfather and grandmother.

D Big adventure! If you submitted to getting in the bath, she used the bloody yard brush to scrub your neck till it bled. And the only reason that you submitted to that was because if you didn't, you didn't get pancakes (laughs).

B We got pancakes for supper!

D The same bloody scrubbing brush that they used to do the front step with. Christ almighty.

B Oh, he's exaggerating.

D I'm not! It was!

B But we definitely got pancakes for supper, which was a treat, was that.

[00:30:02]

J (coming back in the room) You got off the fishing then? (laughs)

**Oh, no, we're still on it.**

B We still haven't got to the fishing.

D We've moved onto prams (all laugh).

J OK! I've just written out those, 'cause there's Bill and Derek there. That's their father, he's a fisherman. And his father was a fisherman. And his father was a fisherman. And his father was a Carrier Over the Sands, which would be…

B The mail.

J The mail across the sands, wouldn't it? And then he was railway porter, and then he was a fisherman. And then back a generation, his father was a farmer. And then that's going back to…

[00:30:40]

**Born 1800.**

J 1800. And on grandmother's… he was a fisherman.

B You've got to remember, any of these…

J He was a shoemaker and he was a joiner.

B Any of these occupations are like the main occupation because…

J Yeah, they probably did fishing as well.

B When you're fishing, there's times of year when there's fish, and there's times when there isn't. And so you've got to be doing a bit of farming, or hawking, or whatever.

D Well, in those days especially, they used to have to farm to get the hay to keep the horses over the winter, to be able to do the fishing. So you had to be able to do both.

B So you had a bit of both, yeah.

D It wasn't an option.

B And obviously, you had to have fields for the horses to be in as well. So you were always a bit of a smallholder. Our dad would have about 30 acres, some of it ploughed and some of it fallow.

D Some being grazed. Some for hay timing.

B And some for hay cropping, taties, beans, the lot. Everything.

D [inaud] [00:31:46] green crop for hawking. 'Cause there was fish, fruit and veg.

B And vegetable.

D And he used to supply 95% of his own veg.

[00:31:55]

**Who's this?**

D Our dad.

B And his dad before him. The difference was that my dad…

D Had a van.

B Had a van. Whereas my granddad had to do it with a horse and cart. And places like Storrs Hall up at Windermere, he used to go on his round with a cart full of stuff when he set off, and fresh fish, and selling it on the way, and buying stuff as well. Because you couldn't get to places like Storrs Hall and back in a day with a horse and cart. So he used to stay overnight and have a little round, where he'd have a night away, or 2 nights away. And to make it worthwhile, he's buying stuff – local produce – to sell as he goes round. So by the time it was my dad, he obviously had a van, so wherever he went was in a day. He used to do Cartmell Fell and Broughton and all that sort of place on a Wednesday. I can't remember what he did on Tuesdays when we were very young. Coniston and all that sort of area on a Friday. And Kendal Market on a Saturday.

He had a Tuesday round which I can't remember 'cause he packed that fairly early – too much on. Wednesday and Friday and Saturday. And again, from a very young age, when he came home on a Friday night, it would be 8, 9 o'clock before he would get home. And the van all has to be emptied, washed out - 'cause it's got fish smell and blood in it and one thing and another – everything had to be scrubbed out and cleaned and loaded up again, ready to go and get

the fish that came on the train from Hull at 4 o'clock in the morning, to get it ready and go to Kendal Market for 7 o'clock in the morning. So he didn't get a lot of sleep. And the emptying and washing and cleaning the van and doing became my job from an early age. I don't know when he got it. I would get out as soon as I could! (laughs)

[00:34:01]

J He bought the fish to sell at market, but then he was selling shrimps and cockles.

B We had all cod and hake and haddock and that sort of thing. We had all the local stuff anyway. You'd want a bigger range.

D Yeah, but it wasn't just Saturday mornings. He was hawking -

B Well, we've already gone through that while you've been attending to nature.

D Ah, right.

B Where did he go on Tuesdays?

D Tuesdays he give up by the time I'd started.

B Well, that's what I've just said. I can't remember where he went on Tuesdays. But anyway, carry on.

D Wednesday was Cartmel, Friday was Coniston. Saturday was…

B Kendal.

D Kendal.

[00:34:37]

**What did your mum have to do in all this?**

D Scalding shrimps. When you pick shrimps…

B Picking.

D Well, yeah.

B Well, light the boiler before… In the old days…

D It's all an integrated job.

B Yeah, it's very much integrated. But in the old days, the fires for boiling the shrimps, you got your shrimp boiler, and the fire was wood, or coal or whatever, so it had to be lit. And your 20 gallons of water or whatever it is in a boiler these days, to be boiling, and the trick was to have boiling just about… so you're not wasting wood and stuff, keeping it boiling for a long while, but just when they get home from the sand, and then the boxes come out of the carts and -

D Straight in the boiler.

B The first lot straight into the boiler. And so lighting the boiler would be the first thing our mother would have to do in those days, because both granddad and dad would be out. So they'd light the boiler. Later they had to pick the shrimps. The ones that went to places like Young's had to be 'as picked'. But if you're selling them -

D You're retailing them.

B – they were scalded, which is just -

J In boiling water, wasn't it?

B Just hot water, boiling water, poured over them and sieved, and then they're spread out to cool.

D Add a bit of salt as a preservative.

B That's right. A bit of salt at that point. But that's literally just to take the slime and stuff off 'em, take all the good taste off actually (J laughs). But for selling 'em, that's what you had to do. Regulations. So she'd be scalding.

D Not just regulations. The bloody things'd go rotten in about 6 hours if you didn't do that. About half a day.

B Well, there is that as well. We won't say what the slime and stuff was, where all the taste comes from. But yes, you can't leave it in contact in normal temperatures. And then -

[00:36:36]

**So you would pick them…**

B So it's take the husks off, picking them, yeah. And then they're scalded, and put out and dried, and any last little bits of scale, you know, from shells and things, picked out.

J They had to go on a riddle first, didn't they, before picking?

B Yeah, but our mother wouldn't do that. The question was what did our mother do? Then she would go to Kendal Market.

D There was also always a sign out ont' street. They'd come in for fish, shrimps, fruit, tomatoes, lettuce, whatever the hell we were selling at the time. So it was always… It wasn't an official shop, but it was always or nearly always summat going on. It was just part of -

B Much the same as a lot of others in the village.

D Yeah, yeah.

B It was a fishing, farming community.

D It wasn't just us.

B In those days, we didn't need Asda (laughs).

D Well, whether they needed it or not, it wasn't there. But people lived in the village that probably never moved more than 5 miles out of the village in their full life. So all their shopping had to be local, and the produce was always available.

B I said earlier that my dad was in a reserved occupation, 'cause it was food generation, but he went into the Navy 'cause he wanted to. And a corollary of that is that the country is short of food, so people are struggling, you're making as much as you can. But you might guess that people didn't go hungry round here, 'cause you'd go to the sand pick your food up, or you're growing it and you've got acres and acres of stuff. So you didn't go hungry round here. You'd got your own hens, your own pigs and one thing and another. So you're making it for sale, but

you're also going to live off it. So it wasn't an unhealthy place to live during the war.

D I wouldn't know (laughs).

B Except when they were bombing Barrow. There was a bomb landed at Allithwaite.

D They bombed Chapel Island.

B They bombed Chapel Island, yeah (laughs). The Germans on the radio claimed to have sunk a battleship in Morecambe Bay (both laugh). Bombed the island.

D Was it Uncle Herbert, there was an unexploded bomb in middle of 'nets. 'He's not gonna have my bloody nets.' And he went and took 'nets off! (laughs)

[00:39:15]

**Did you pick shrimps as well?**

D Yes.

B Yes.

D You weren't allowed out to play till -

B When we were kids, that was right. In summer holidays from school, you had to pick a quarter shrimps before you could go out to play.

D And on school nights, you had to pick a jill (ph) [00:39:31].

B Aye.

[00:39:31]

**What's a jill (ph)?** [00:39:33]

B A quarter of a quarter.

D I can't remember.

J Two pints in a quart. A jill was smaller, wasn't it?

B The dry measure, 2 jills is one pint, and 2 pints is one quarter. So we had to pick a quart-

D No, it's 4 pints for a quart, I think.

B Well, whatever it is. We'll have to look it up.

D It's not very big, but there's a hell of a lot of shrimps in it.

B Yeah, it takes a long while when you're kids and everybody wants to be out to play.

D And it's usually gone dark before I finish. I was crap at peeling.

B Some were slower than others (both laugh).

D I think others pinched what I'd done (both laugh)

[00:40:10]

**So you didn't enjoy picking, Derek?**

D No. No.

B The trouble is -

J You're sitting still for too long. It's not a child's thing, is it?

B The trouble is, it wasn't the pile that was put in front of you that had to be picked. It's the pile of picked shrimps that was measured. So when you pick one and put it down, pick one and eat it, pick one and put it down, pick one and eat it, it slows the output rate before you get out. And that might've been more to do with why he never got his finished.

[00:40:38]

**So you were saying you were the intelligent one?**

(D laughs)

B I didn't say that! You just made that assumption.

J He was the one that was made to go to school and university.

B Yeah.

D Go back a couple of generations, and the eldest was always the pampered one, the one that was going to continue the line.

B And they were also the ones that got the money an' all. That doesn't happen either now.

D And they got the money and all the rest of it. And the rest were just [inaud] [00:41:07] (laughs).

J I think that was the case in your dad's... 'cause you see they could only afford to send one to grammar school, couldn't they? They sent Uncle Frank, didn't they?

B No. Quite the opposite. Uncle Frank went to technical school. Our dad went to grammar school.

J Oh, did he?

B But he didn't like it. And in those days, my granddad had to buy him out of school, so he could come home and work. 'Cause I don't know, you'll have better access to records than I will, but he went to grammar school, but was needed for work at home, and he was bought out.

[00:41:40]

**How do you mean bought out?**

B Well, I don't know, but granddad had to pay for him to not go to school.

**Do you know about that, Derek?**

D No.

B Well, he's too young to know anything.

D I was nowt but a babby then (laughs).

B That was part of the problem that when I went to school and decided I'd had enough and I wanted out -

J It was probably compulsory education up to a certain age, wouldn't it be?

B Well, I don't know, 'cause don't forget they're older than us.

J Yeah.

B I mean, in those days, they were lucky if they got an education. And that's probably why he had to pay to bring him out, because he'd taken a place that somebody else might've been able to have used. But whatever it was, it was always a thing in the family that he'd been bought out to work at home. I didn't get that luxury. I had to stick it out (J laughs). And what's more, I went to the local secondary school for one year, 'cause having passed the 11+, I wouldn't go to the grammar school 'cause I didn't wanna play rugby. I'd already broken one leg playing football but I didn't wanna play rugby. I thought I'd get crumpled. And a few years later, I stayed at the grammar school to do A levels, because I was the school rugby captain! (laughs)

[00:42:58]

**Was that Ulverston?**

B Yes.

**Did your dad go there as well?**

B Yes.

**But you didn't, Derek?**

D No.

B Well, he wasn't clever enough to find his way to the station, 'cause you had to go on the train.

**Which school did you go to, Derek?**

D School of hard knocks (laughs).

B Cartmel Secondary.

**Was that the local - ?**

B Yeah.

D You'd start off at Flookburgh and then up to Holker for intermediates, as you might call it.

B Juniors.

D And then onto Cartmel for -

B 11+ upwards.

D Yeah. Up to about 14. And then start and go fishing and farming and whatever the hell.

J Did you not have to stay longer than that then in those days?

B He'd have to wait till he was 16. He's exaggerating again.

D No. It was totally illegal but it was totally accepted in country areas, if you'd a job to go to, they didn't come looking for you.

J Oh, right.

D Michael McClure did 'same.

B And look where it got Michael.

J I didn't realise that.

D Yep. It wasn't legal. You know. It was just an accepted thing in rural areas there was people needed to work at home and that was it.

[00:44:07]

**Did you want to do that or - ?**

D I didn't have a – It was -

B He never wanted to go to school.

D Absolutely correct. I hated going to school. But it wasn't anything I ever considered from being about that big. It was always assumed that I'd go into fishing, farming. So I did.

B And it was always what I wanted to do, and I couldn't. It's the way it wa'.

D Poor little chap (J and D laugh, B sniffs).

[00:44:39]

**So what was your school experience like, Bill?**

B It was alright, in the sense that I was lucky I was quite clever, so I didn't work very hard. It was as simple as that (laughs). And I went to school reluctantly. I didn't want to go to school per se, but I loved the athletics and the rugby and all the other bits and pieces. And so it was… as they say, it sure as hell beat working (laughs). And then when I got my O levels and A levels, and then I got paraded up and down in front of the headmaster… well, he marched up and down his study, telling me I'd failed the school… sorry, I'd failed myself, I'd failed my family, I'd failed all the teachers, and worst of all, I'd failed the school. Because I refused to apply for university. I'd already got a job down at Glaxo, which the school didn't know about. But again, I had a friend at school who had… one of the managers was his dad. And through rugby and motorbikes and things, we were big friends, so I spent a lot of time at his house, and he said I'd love it there. You know, my sort of things that I like fiddling with that… This bloke was a chemist, but he says, "You want to be a chemical engineer." Bucket chemists, he called them. Bucket chemists. And er… well, one thing led to another and I went down, had an interview, and got offered a job. And the problem was that at the end of it I'd to see somebody fairly high up. And they said, "Well there's…" You know, "We can offer you this job doing such and such and da da da da da." And I was thinking, "Right, I can start on Monday," you know. And they said, "The only condition is you have to stay at school and finish your A levels" because… I'd forgotten one thing, I broke a leg playing rugby, and I'd missed the whole term, the whole of the last term. And I had to go back. Sorry, the whole of the Easter term. And I had to go back to do the summer term. And I think, "Well, I'm gonna

be useless now for the exams and things", so I didn't wanna do it. I'd got this job. But they insisted that I went back.

In the event, I passed the exams and that was alright. I went down to Glaxo, and they immediately packed me off to night school to do various things. Erm… and er… unfortunately for me my line managers were very good people, and had me forced to go to university within a year or two [laughs]. But the difference was, I was actually… not paid, but employed by Glaxo at that point, so I got my stamp. They were stamping my national insurance card. Although I didn't get paid. But I went back and worked in the holidays, so I got money. So while I was at university, I had a sort of a part time job at Glaxo.

[00:47:57]

**Were you living at home?**

B Yes. At that time.

D Well, no, you'd be living at Leeds.

B Well, when I went to university, that was in Leeds, obviously, I weren't living at home then. But yes, I was living at home before that. Erm… and in amongands [?] [00:48:12] we got married and er… and Jan went to Leeds University as well. But she was a little bit later than me so er… I was home one year before she'd finished, so we spent a lot of time rushing backwards and forwards to Leeds, and bought a house locally, which was a mortgage repossession, and it was some wild bloody do-it-yourself-er who'd pulled out all the fireplaces and several other things in the place, and they were still there in the middle of the floors. So it was like a -

D Not all the floors, 'cause he'd burned half of that.

B Well… it was a bit of a mess, but we couldn't afford a lot, having gone to university (laughs).

**What, the person who'd had it before had burnt the floors?**

J Yes.

B Well, the person that had had it before had er… I think he'd… well, I don't know quite what had happened, but he fancied himself as a do-it-yourselfer, or a wrecker (J laughs). But fell off on his mortgage payments and it was repossessed, so we finished up buying it as a building site. But that… that was just to sort of round off my education (laughs).

[00:49:14]

**So how did you two meet?**

J At Glaxo.

B At Glaxo.

J I was working at Glaxo. We started on the same day.

B We both started at Glaxo on the 4th of September 1967, a day that will live in infamy (all laugh, D groans). Aye. So it was er… yes. Left school and immediately got trapped.

[00:49:40]

**Were you still fishing when you were at university?**

B Yes. No, not at university. I would come home at weekends and sometimes do an odd tide or two, but not many, no.

J You mainly got called upon to fix tractors.

B Yeah. By that time… It's a very harsh environment for mechanical stuff.

**What is?**

B The sea, the sand, the fishing. It's all grinding paste all the time, and it's salt, so everything's wearing rapidly, and everything that isn't wearing's seizing. It just rusts up. So… Plus the fact the old tractors get hammered to death, flying backwards and forwards as fast as they'll go. And a little bit faster, 'cause we used to adjust the racks on the diesel pumps so that they would open up and go a lot faster. So whenever I came home, I was fixing tractors or welding chassis or things like that. So I didn't get to go very often then to the sands but -

J Show Marion the pictures of the tractors and things so that she understands -

B It's Marion, not [inaud].

J I said Marion.

B Oh, sorry (laughs).

D It's his lugs (laughs).

J If you've photographs of the tractors and things, with the nets and that, and then you've got an idea of what's involved in catching the shrimps and things.

[00:50:58]

**Did you get involved in repairing machinery?**

D That's 90% of the bloody work (J laughs). Yes. I've got a full set of hammers. If it doesn't work, hit it with an hammer. If it still doesn't work, hit it with a bigger hammer.

B Derek, have you got them photographs to show Marion? I was just gonna show her that one because, that's nothing to do with tractors, but that's my dad fishing a net. He's just clicking at the horse, or he's just clicked at the horse and it's now going forwards. So at this point he wants it to turn left to come out of the water.

D If it's been pulling down, it would be about another 18 inch, 2 foot deeper than that where he's been working.

B Yes.

D You pull towards the side, but not too far, because in the water, the net is a lot lighter. So you'd get it up as far as you can, and then get out to the side and pull that from over the back. That's your cod end (ph) [00:51:52] with your catch in, if that makes sense. And er… as you can see, there used to be bloody hundreds of 'em.

[00:51:58]

**All out at once?**

D Yeah. Yeah, well, all following the same… well, not necessarily the exact same bit, but more or less all going down the same channel. You know, you'd go… there'd be so many'd go to one place, so many'd go to another. But with the

horses, you had a sort of limited, finite range. If you wanted to go a long way down, you didn't really have a lot of time to do your fishing. So you tended to work the higher ends of the channels more with the horses. Once they got mechanised, they could go farther and faster, and you ended up a lot further down on the sand working quite a lot than horses. I mean, these… that quite easily could be just opposite Bardsey or just opposite Ulverston.

B But it isn't, it's well down below Aldingham.

D Yeah, yeah. I'm just saying, there's -

B Down at West Dyke! (laughs)

D Yeah.

[00:53:00]

**What are the names of the places where you went?**

D It changes all the time. It's completely different now to what it was 5 year ago.

B Yes.

D So the places and the names, they change, because it's never exactly the same. It's -

B No two tides.

D About three years ago the main channel was this side of Chapel Island, and it was carving in towards Sandgate, and in towards what we call Colpen Point (ph) [00:53:28] and it had dug out a scar. It's now back over the other side of the

island, and it's filled all that lot in, and there's only the very few stones showing of the big boulders right on the top that are now showing of the scar. You wouldn't... Anybody that didn't know it was there, you'd never realise it was there. And yet… oh, about 14, 15, maybe a bit more, 20 years ago, it dug that scar out, so that there was a lot of acreage, there'd probably be 10, 15 acres of scar showing.

[00:54:03]

**What's scar?**

D It's rock. Bedrock.

B 'Cause that was a sandy, silty Bay, but here and there there's little hills sticking up. Underneath it it's rock, obviously, and here and there, little hills stick up. And they sometimes show, sometimes they're covered by sand.

D As the sand settles over time… Well, most of the time it's covered with sand. But er… yeah.

B But this Itterage[1] (ph) scar is always there.

D That's sticking out at the moment. It's not always.

B Well, I've never known it be covered. But there you go. It's… Itteridge scar is just a piece of rock that sticks out… not exactly in the middle of the Bay, but it's well out from the shore.

D It's well out from Baycliff.

B From Baycliff, yeah. It's on the Baycliff side. But we -

1 Ideridge Scar

D Well, you say it's ont' Baycliff side. A few year ago, the channel was t'other side of that.

B Well, again, when I was doing it, Itterage -

J The channel moves, doesn't it?

B Itterage was on 'tother side of the channel when I was young. And yes, it's moving all the time, but it didn't move that far in my day, because it was always on the east side of Iderage.

D It is again now.

B But it would get to the stage where you had to be a little bit careful when you're trawling down with the tractor, that you didn't actually catch the rocks when -

D Because your nets are 100, 200 yards away from you, you've got to judge the distances. And you're in 6, 8, 10 foot o' water. So at times, the only reference you've got is two buoys sticking up – one off the tail of each net. You've got to judge where the hell the underwater rocks are, so's -

B It depends.

D The best place is close to the rocks, 'cause there's always a scoured (ph) [00:55:42] hole. And there's usually good shrimps in the scoured (ph) [00:55:47] hole. But you don't want to go close enough that you hit the rock.

B That's gonna cost you your net, at least (laughs).

D Yeah. And usually a swim (laughs).

J So, yeah.

[00:55:59]

**So did you pick up that from working with your dad?**

B Oh, yeah.

D Well, actually, at the very beginning, we were probably quicker on the uptake than them, because they were so used to the horses.

B When I first started -

D Because they'd always worked with horses rather than tractors, so when the tractors were first beginning, a lot of the actual bone fide older generation fishermen hated and detested the sight of a bloody tractor.

B That's correct. My granddad used to… well, he didn't want us to go onto tractors, but that's neither here nor there, we did. But when I first started, as soon as I'd… I was a powerful young lad in those days, not a decrepit old mule now. But very much that. When you were big enough that you could lift the net on, you were big enough to go shrimping. It didn't work very well if you couldn't get the net on. But if you could lift the net on -

D No, it does, 'cause you lift it at one end and then hold it on, and walk to t'other. Which was what I had to do (laughs).

B Well, I used to go with my granddad, and they wouldn't let me go by myself for a long while. There are good reasons for that, not just me. They didn't generally go in ones, because if somebody gets stuck, you need some help. And while

there's a lot of rubbish talked about quicksand in the Bay, there is mud that you can get stuck in.

D A lot of mud.

B And it moves about. And particularly in hot weather, you get things that they call flow holes. It scours out holes in the channels and then -

[00:57:33]

**Called what, sorry?**

B Flow holes, where it's just scoured out with the flow of the water. God knows how it works.

D You get turbulent water, and it will scour a hole. And then as the tides change, getting higher or lower or whatever, the hole will fill with mud. So you've now got a big depression filled with mud. And at certain times on the very low tides, it'll put a two or three inch skim of semi-solid sand over the top of it. So you've to… you can actually walk across it, quite often. You'll realise it's wobbly. But you ride into that with a tractor, because you've got a ton and a half of tractor, it'll just glug you straight into a mud hole.

B In the good old days with horses -

D As soon as the [inaud] [00:58:18] of the tractor hits the mud, your wheels go round but you don't go anywhere.

B In the good old days, you see, the horses had a bit more sense than a tractor. When they put their foot on that, they would… what they used to call they would strike. The horse would sort of really -

D Move out.

B It would get on with it. It wouldn't – I mean, it can't go backwards, 'cause everything's behind it but -

D It'd stride out, get across it.

B It'd strike out and go. No matter what the driver was telling 'em to do, the horse knows it's on something that won't support it, and it would be doing its damndest to get out. So they usually… they knew which side, which way to turn to deeper or shallower water. So for us working on the west -

D The horse saved itself a lot of times.

B Yeah. And you with it. But as I say, when I started, I used to go with my granddad, he used to have one horse and cart, and I used to have another. And after a while, you get bored, young lads, 'cause as he'd already mentioned, it takes quite a long while getting where you're going with a horse. An hour, maybe. And so you're just plodding along at 5 or 6 mile an hour, the horses, and you're just sitting there jolting around. So I used to curl myself… On a Saturday, I used to curl myself up in the bottom of the cart, wrap the net round me and go to sleep while the horse followed the other one (laughs). And we would… well, that was it. I'd go shrimping from a very early age on Saturdays and Sundays and all the school holidays. And then as we moved onto tractors, it got a bit different.

Have you got them other photographs, Derek?

D I left 'em with you.

[01:00:02]

**Did you used to do that as well, Derek? Did you ever - ?**

D I went with the horses, but only once or twice on my own. I was at the – It was the four years between us was effectively the tipping point from horses being old fashioned, and tractors -

J I had my own horse. Good old Tom.

Here, you'd better sort them [photos] because we won't want all of 'em, just er -

D Well, I don't have any with tractors in here, I don't think.

J Put the light on.

B Well, I don't know if we've got a lot in the way of tractors.

D This is all -

B When all the family photographs went missing, I didn't get 'em.

J Put the light on. It's getting a bit dark, isn't it?

D That's my granddad and Uncle Herbert fishing in a stream, that. What we call a stream there, for flukes. Or plaice.

B That's Uncle Herbert, which is Grandmother Butler's brother.

D These are my granddad. Daft as it sounds, that's just at back o' hill here.

B It is. Just ont' road at back o'hill.

D And that’s at Sandgate, just coming off.

B Just coming off the shore.

D My granddad with a couple o’ hors-, couple o’ carts int’ yard.

Mm… I can’t...

B It’s somebody trawling, that is.

D I can’t quite make out who that is but -

[01:01:22]

**So the horse is kind of submerged up to its -**

D You’d go -

B Over its back sometimes.

D That cart, the back end of the cart would quite often be just lapping at er… at water depth. As kids, we’d sit on the very front of the cart.

B Yeah, you’d sit up the front. And my dad used to put the shrimp boxes up on the front if he wanted to go a bit deeper.

D And you’d still get your backside wet.

B Yeah, yeah (J laughs). It was always greed. A bit deeper, it’s a bit better (laughs).

J Did you do the cockling when you were younger?

B Yeah, yeah.

D And that's a generation before. You can see the women are cockling there. That's cockling, the girls in dresses.

That's probably… I've been told those are probably my granddad's sisters. But I don't know.

That's our father and grandfather, and some bugger else.

[01:02:11]

**That's cockling?**

D That's cockling, aye.

B That's what you call a jumbo. And you wobble it backwards and forwards, and the ridged sand goes smooth. And these little blobs are cockles that have come to the surface. And -

J You're tamping the air out really, aren't you?

D Well -

B And this is my granddad with a cattle basket and what they call a craam. It's a little handle about 18 inches long, or [?] [01:02:37] shorter than 18 inches and it's got 3 claws on the end. And it was just picking -

J You're tamping the air out.

D Years ago, when I was a kid, they always used to say, 'We think it's the tide coming in.'

J Oh, right.

D But as you grew up, you realised it's dead simple physics. You make a slurry. The sand's heavier than the cockle, the sand sinks, forces the cockle to the surface. It's dead basic physics, but you don't realise that when you're a young 'un.

That's er…

B Those are flukes.

D This would be level full when they started. You can see there's box fulls of 'em spread out all over the bloody place.

[01:03:02]

**So they're unloading the flukes?**

D That's getting flukes ready for t' market.

B Flukes from Flookburgh.

J The flukes are like plaice, aren't they?

B So you've got shrimps here. You've got -

D Cockling.

B You've got floor netting there, which could be salmon, or flukes, or anything else.

D No, it couldn't be salmon, because that would be illegal (all laugh).

J You've not [?] [01:03:30] to catch salmon with a net.

B Well, we'd throw the salmon back.

D Obviously, yes. Yes.

B And then you've got flukes there and you've got cockles there, so the only thing we're missing is whitebait (laughs).

J Oh, yeah, whitebait.

D I did have some of them but they're not in this lot, I don't know where they are.

B No, I wouldn't [?] [01:03:43].

J I can remember you taking the whitebait down to Young's.

D That was my grandfather. There you go, I'll let you give 'story o' that.

B Well, no, that's Prince Phillip coming over from… Grandfather was the guide to bring Prince Phillip across from…

D Lancaster to... Barrow.

B From Lancaster, up to Silverdale and across to here. I don't know, did he take him on to Ulverston or not?

D I've no idea.

B Can't remember. I was only a little brat then.

J Might've been going Holker. Probably going to Holker Hall.

B Well, they might've stopped at Holker Hall, yeah. But Grandfather was the guide for that so… And somewhere there's another one of Princess… is it Anne or Margaret? I can't remember which.

D That's Grandfather and Father riddling shrimps.

B When you catch 'em, they come up… well, you riddle 'em at the sand many a time.

D Most o'… well, it's a legal requirement, you riddle 'em before you come 'ome.

B It wasn't always a legal requirement.

D It was.

B You did it when you could.

D It was always a legal requirement, but you did it when you could. It wasn't always enforced, same as it isn't now, and it should be (laughs).

B These are various size riddles, they used to call 'em tuppence ha'penny or threpenny riddles…

D Threpenny, threpenny ha'penny, thre'penny farthing.

B And that was how wide the mesh… the wires were. And you riddle them, did it long way, and the small ones would go through. And you'd turn 'em crossways. And it would mix 'em up and you could pick the…

D Bits o' muck out.

J Bits of seaweed and stuff out.

B Bits of muck out. So these are small shrimps, and they're just cleaning the bigger ones, which they'll then throw into a different box, and carry on with the next lot.

D That's Grandfather just demonstrating a jumbo, and that looks like an halfway decent tide's work.

B Of cockles.

D Of cockles.

And that's the basket where they used to pick one at a time into 'basket. So…

B And that's our dad int' background and…

D I'm pretty sure that's Father int' background. Aye.

B Yeah, you're right, that'll be his beret. I was thinking he didn't have a high forehead like that, but he's got his beret on, pulling his hair back.

[01:05:50]

**What was your favourite sort of fishing?**

B Shrimps.

**What about you, Derek?**

D Talking about it int' pub (all laugh uproariously). Hell, there's been more fish caught in that pub than there ever has int' Bay (laughs).

B Ah, I was always just shrimps, me. That's really one o' the reasons why it wasn't a good idea for me to be a fisherman. Salmoning was too boring. Cockling's too much like hard work.

D It is bloody hard work, cockling, but I used to enjoy shrimping [?] [01:06:21].

B Flukes and things, I just don't like the baulk netting and one thing and another.

D I do. I do.

B I quite like the whitebait. Whitebait's a different set up again. You have a shrimp net, but instead of tying the tail off, you get a longer tail of a finer mesh, and you have a leading section of a bigger mesh. And the tops are buoyed, and the bottoms are weighted. And you have big steel stakes that you put out and set 'em, erm… on the side of a channel.

D Or a dyke.

B Well… where water's gonna be running down as the tide goes back. And these things just sit there facing upstream. Tide comes in and passes them, if you like, but when it comes back, it goes through 'em.

D It has to go through the net.

B And there's certain times o' year, round about November's a good time, particularly on the quiet, starlit nights, you get very heavy shoals of little whitebait.

D For whitebait, what you need is an extended period of calm weather, hopefully coinciding with cold, which keeps 'em fresh.

B Yes, 'cause they burst very quickly.

D And coinciding with when there's shoals. So you want cold weather, low tides, and no wind.

J Are they young herrings?

B No. Sprats.

D They're a different… they are a different species. It depends who you talk to. Different scientists…

J I know the big whitebait are sprats, but I don't know whether… I thought they were sort of like herring.

D I always used to think that.

B But they're not, they're a species.

D They're a species on their own. But er… yeah, it's… they're the same family.

J Do you still catch… ?

B The thing about those, going back, is that when you came back… as he said, you want it to be cold because they don't keep.

D Their bellies burst.

B They actually burst very quickly. So you've gotta get 'em home.

D Get 'em cleaned.

B And you've got a big table on a slight slope with water running down it. And you're putting 'em on the top and you spread 'em around, and you have to pick out anything that's more than an inch and a half long.

J That was a cold job, I can remember doing that. Oh, it was freezing.

B Yeah. So people are standing round -

J Standing there with your hands in cold water.

B With water running off the table everywhere.

D Splashing up your knees.

B Yeah. And everybody's got wellies, freezing feet.

D No matter how you dress, you're always damp. Even if you're not wet, you're damp, because -

B And as we've already said, it's usually frosty weather when you're doing it.

J They had to all be weighed into plastic bags, didn't they?

D One pound packs.

B One pound packs. And then flash frozen straight away. So it was a bang-bang-bang job.

J You had to fold the boxes up and put them… I remember putting them flat in them boxes and then piling them up -

B You used to get the boxes just as flat cardboard from -

D You'd to make 'em up into 'box itself (laughs).

B So we had to make the boxes up.

J So it came in a flat box, like a pizza box.

B These were Young's, Young's seafood (laughs).

D Young's supplied the boxes and the bags.

B So the thing was, when you bought the Young's seafood -

J And they were round… they were round at Cark near where you've just got off the train. The factory was round there.

B Yeah, yeah. But the thing is, when you bought the Young's seafood then, the only bit -

D The only thing Young's had ever done -

B - Young's had ever seen was the outside of the box and the freezer.

D All they'd ever done was transporting 'em.

B That's right. To market. To be fair.

D We used to… I can remember there was our father and Albert were working together.

[01:09:50]

**Who's Albert?**

B Albert Benson (laughs).

D Albert Benson.

B Another of the old fishermen was Albert, probably our -

J Mother's mother's brother, was it? Grandmother's brother?

B No.

D No, no, no. Albert and Ali.

J Oh, right. Different Bensons.

D David Benson's cousin, would it be?

B Yes. David Benson's dad and Ali and Abbey were brothers.

D Yeah. Tommy…

B Tommy was the oldest.

D Tommy was the eldest, then Albert and then Ali.

B Tommy had his leg blown off. He was a red beret and he stepped on a landmine and got his leg blown off, so he had a metal leg, and still went shrimping.

D And his arm. He only had a…

B And his… yeah, and he had a hook on one arm, yeah.

D One arm, one leg, and he was still -

B And a big heart! (laughs)

D One o' best welders in bloody Barrow shipyard afterwards (laughs).

B In Vickers. That's right! Yeah. And Young's -

D And still went shrimping and cockling and -

B And David, his son, carried on in Vickers.

D Eldest son. No, not eldest. Edward was the eldest.

B Edward was eldest, yeah. But David, who's still in the village, they were all fishermen when they were young. In fact, they really should be credited with most of the development work.

D Yeah, but we've diversified -

J Yeah, we've digressed from your family now!

B They should be credited with a lot of the development work of the tractors -

D Ali Baba? Ali was t'one that brought tractors into t' job.

B Well, that's what I'm saying.

D Aye.

B Tommy was t'man who made 'em.

D He might've welded 'em for him but it was Ali that -

B The jockey.

D - did the development, as you might say.

B Ali was the jockey. He was only a little fella, he used to ride horses (laughs) and race 'em.

[01:11:20]

**So you were telling me a story about your father and Ali?**

D Right. I think it would be an Easter weekend, and Young's… as Young's had shut down for the weekend, or they were shutting down for the weekend, and because of the way the tides were going, we were expecting to get quite a lot of whitebait that weekend. And I can't remember who was the manager at Young's at the time, but they had… in the very early days…

B Robin.

D No, Robin wasn't the manager. I know who you mean. But no, it was before Robin's day. Erm, before… right at the very beginning of whitebait, we used to freeze them at home in our own chest freezers and suchlike. And then when we started getting bigger quantities, you would get them all home and cleaned and take them up to the factory for blast freezing. And er… our dad and Albert persuaded the manager at the time, McCartney, I think it was. Anyway. Whoever it was. They persuaded 'em to leave the keys of the blast freezers, so's that… 'It's gonna be a good weekend,' you know, and 'We need to get…' And they bloody near filled the freezers! (laughs) There'd be… there must've been about 10 of us working up in the factory just putting 'em into the blast freezers, getting… you know, there was quite a lot of freezers. And obviously Young's being a big firm. And it was like a crocodile sort of system of… somebody was feeding one lot in, getting another lot out. And once you'd got your one pound packs frozen, you had to put… I can't remember exactly, I think it was probably 24 of the one pound packs into boxes, and then carton up the boxes, take them up, and then they'd go across into the big freezer. Well, we must've filled a bloody room as big or bigger than this room with cartons of whitebait, just over the weekend. We came in on the Tuesday and there was no room for them to have their bloody deliveries (laughs). We'd damn near filled the freezers on 'em, yeah. That was er…

J A good weekend.

D It was one hell of a weekend, aye. They got er… I think he made more… our father made more that weekend than he paid me that year (B laughs). So… yeah.

[01:13:48]

**So your father used to pay you?**

D Yes. Yes.

B (imitating father) “You get paid every time you sit down at that table!”

D Every time you sat at table you got fed you were paid. “You were well paid!” (all laugh)

[01:14:04]

**Is that what he used to say?**

B When we were kids.

D We were well paid, aye (laughs).

B He might be mercenary, but we were learning.

J You were wanting to get paid?

B “Go and do such and such.” “How much is it worth?” “You get paid every time you sit down at that table!”

D That field next door. Uncle -

B Uncle Harold’s.

D Uncle Harold’s, right. This is when I learnt to negotiate your pay before you do the job. I’d be… I’d be about 13, I would guess. “Plough us that field, I’ll see you reyt.” So I goes and ploughs t’field. “Aye, well it’ll need stitching now.” “Well, it’ll need rotavating.” So I ended up ploughing it, stitching it, rotavating it, stitching it up again… “Nay, it’s not quite right yet.” Knocking it down wi’ harrows, rotavating it again and stitching it up. And I’m thinking, “There’s about four days bloody work in this.” “Ee y’are, Wiz.” And he give us a kit kat (D and J laugh). It *was* a four fingered kit kat!

J A big one.

D But from then on, I always negotiated my rate *before* I did the job.

B He’s being mercenary. I used to do that for nowt. I used to love doing it.

D Yeah, I enjoyed doing it, but I wanted to be paid.

B But obviously I wasn’t available by that time, so he had to do it.

[01:15:26]

**What did you say, Jan, sorry?**

J I don’t know.

**Oh, sorry. I thought you said, "She's being mercenary." You meant Derek was being mercenary.**

J No, Derek.

D I can remember when I first used the rotavator. It was a little Massey Fergie 35. And we used to have a field down on the Humphrey Head Road, and at the end of the field was what they call The Cut. Which is a big drainage ditch.

B – drainage ditch that runs right across the moor.

D And it actually runs out down at Sandgate, here.

B – Sandgate.

D But… I don't know what age I was, but the clutch for the power take-off that runs the rotavator, it's a two clutch system. The first one stops your road rails going, and the further... if you go further down…

B It stops the hydraulic pump.

D - it stops the hydraulics going. So, grandfather takes me down to t'field, set us off rotavating, and away he went. Well, it was t'first time I'd rotavated down there. And I said earlier you had to put your weight on to get the clutch down. Well, I got to the end, put my clutch down, the bloody rotavator bit in, and set off at a great… started pushing instead of the rails. So the tractor actually accelerated, front wheels went out over the top, it was actually sat on the hedge, and I'm stood up with t'clutch down, but I had to -

B To the foot for t'clutch (laughs).

D No. Clutch down. Clutch down. And I'm heaving up with my bloody hands. And I had to really struggle to get it down far enough to get the – I wasn't heavy enough to get the bloody power take-off off. (J laughs). I'm pushing up with my hands and reaching down, trying to knock the bloody thing out of gear, because I couldn't lift it without the hydraulics running.

B Mm.

D So it was stuck there with the bloody wheels out on top of the hedge over the water, and me thinking, "It's gonna go down!" (laughs). Anyway, I managed to get the bloody thing out of gear and that got the hydraulics back. And from that, I reversed back, and never went that close to the hedge again (laughs).

J They learned to drive tractors at a very early age, didn't you?

D Yeah, yeah. It's a bugger when you're not heavy enough to… I mean, I never actually… That was when I actually learned about the second clutch. I knew about the second clutch, but I knew I wasn't heavy enough to make it work. But I hadn't realised that, for that job, you HAD to make it work (laughs). Yeah.

[01:17:58]

**For rotavating, you mean, you had to make it work?**

D Yeah. That was for rotavating. Anything that used power take-off. Hydraulics.

B For tractors, you've got to… It's just like a car, but, as he says, the clutch has a second phase. With a car, you just push it down to the ground. You can push it down to the ground on a tractor as well, these older tractors. But you don't need to, because it's disengaged the road wheels, the gear box. But push it further,

there's a hydraulic pump. It's pushing oil round the gear box and things all the time, and it takes this high pressure oil through a power take-off system. So it's like a turbine that drives… an oil-driven turbine, that drives a shaft, which drives whatever machinery you're connected to. So the hydraulic pump is also on the same clutch. It may or may not be a turbine, but whatever, there's a hydraulic pump.

D Your power take-off is direct from… through your gear box. The hydraulic pump does your ups and downs for your arms. But anyway, that's…

B Depends on which one.

J That's farming, not fishing, isn't it?

B Well…

J It's intertwined, isn't it? You've got to do a bit of both, really.

D Yeah. I can remember one time he took us down int' Moggie Thou.

[01:19:21]

**What's that?**

D Morris Thousand Traveller car.

J That was what he used to do his -

D Crust of bread… We had horses and we always used to rotate them. So many resting, so many working. And it was my job… It took us down, bit o' binder twin

round ‘orse’s nose, fed it a crust of bread, threw me on its back. Well, it was like one o’ them bloody what’s-er-name Atlee thing with legs sticking straight out.

J Oh, Thelwell?

D Summat like that, aye.

[01:19:52]

**Oh, the cartoons?**

J Cartoon, yeah.

D I’m sat on top of this ruddy great -

B He’s still a cartoon.

D These bloody great big carthorses, they’re wide. They’re not your racehorse things. So it’s a bloody mile across. So my legs are sticking out like that. He throws me on its back and sets it off, heading it towards home. So he then comes past int’ bloody car, and it took him 50 yards or more to actually get past it, just being very, very careful.

B He’s a careful driver, granddad.

D Then when he realised he was past it, he tooted ‘horn and waved, and the bloody horse passed him! (D and J laugh). Ba-dum, badum!

B This same field down on the moor -

J Child cruelty!

B This same field down on the moor has a number of tales associated with it. One with my dad where he nearly lost the fingers on his hand. Because these horses, as he says, you're keeping ‘em in different fields, and you're using different horses, so they don’t get worn out. They have to have rest. It’s hard work, this shrimping. And -

D Plus you get cold and -

B And as he said, Grandfather had taken him down and put him on his back, he was fetching the horse up. Well, he was fetching the horse up to go shrimping. Well, my dad would do that as well. So he would be dropped off and he would ride it up. And this is quite normal.

D Yeah, everybody did it.

B But of course, there’s nobody to throw him on. So there’s a little bridge, a little parapet. So he would lead the horse, get to the bridge, stand it still, get up on the parapet, and then just up onto the horse. On this one occasion, he’s just throwing his leg over and going out, and the horse moves sideways. So he goes flat down onto his hands and knees, and the horse comes back over and puts his foot down on his hand.

J Oh dear.

B With the steel shoes on.

D Slit it right up between the… slit his hand wide up there.

B And broke two fingers. So it was a bit of a mess was his hand (laughs). It had a relatively large horse resting on it for a while.

D Aye, ‘cause the bugger wouldn’t move (laughs). Once it’d stood on him, that was it.

B Well, that’s it. They were very staid, these things. They didn’t move about a lot. (laughs).

J Didn’t go anywhere.

B Unless you went [clicks his tongue].

D He did same with his… from Cartmel. Crust o’ bread, and er… slapped its arse, and off I come down… down Green Lane. I don’t know what age I was, but I didn’t know the way home in them days.

B The horse would.

D I didn’t know the way home from Cartmel, but it didn’t matter, ‘cause you’re ont’ horse’s back and it knew where it was going. And it “cler-dunk, cler-dunk, cler-dunk.” Don’t anybody ever believe that a bloody horse is nice to ride, ‘cause they’re not (J laughs). They’ll shatter your spine. I got all the way to Ravenstown Corner with this bloody horse, which is… what?

J Just down the bottom of there.

D Hundred yards down here.

B At the bottom of the hill.

D And stupid thing, you should never, ever do it, I’d wrapped the binder twine round my hand. And as it come past the Ravenstown corner, it was…

“pfffmmmmmpt”. Put its head down. Well… (whistles), I went straight over the bloody top, smack right outside Auntie Nelly’s, hit the bloody ground. Blood pouring out of various parts of me. Sat there yowling. And the bloody horse stands and looks at me for about half a minute, and then got bored, and it just walked off into ‘yard (laughs). It went home on its own (laughs). Left me. [screams] I do remember being a bit miffed that they took more concern of the bloody horse than they did of me.

[01:23:34]

**I suppose the horses were -**

D A living (laughs).

**Yeah.**

D The horse had to be right. I could wait.

J Like part of the family.

B There were various incidents when we were kids, nothing to do with farming or shrimping or anything else, but it’d snowed. Well, you’ve seen this hill out here.

D Aye, yeah.

B It’s a good sledge run is this, when you get good dry snow. And if you go right from the top, you can pretty well just about get to Jutland Corner.

D Oh, yeah, well, past it.

B When it’s icy snow.

D You can't nowadays.

B No. Nowadays it all gets gritted, or people grit it. The people who live on the hill will grit it. They want to get up with their damn cars. But anyway, the cousin of… I was a baby, and a cousin of mine was taking us sledging on the hill here. And we er… we were sledging here, and Rosemary was… sorry, Annie, Annie next door, who was a cousin, was looking after me. And we were sledging. Well, we've already said about they were market gardeners, this, that and the other, would buy certain fish in, well, they'd also buy certain vegetables and things in. So we had Parsons' Wagon, who was a wholesaler, just parked at the bottom of the hill there.

D Gilbert.

B And we were coming down hill on this sledge. Annie in charge, me sitting in front. "Go faster, go faster." But I had a nasty habit, or a silly habit, in those days, of when I was excited, I used to stick my tongue out. Well, we only hit this wagon. My teeth went 'bang' like that [slap]. And I've still… the scar on my tongue, I chopped my tongue up. It was hanging on at one corner (laughs). So I can outdo his blood. There was buckets o' this ruddy stuff. We were at t'bottom o' the hill and the snow was red for yards round. And this er… My dad comes rushing out in a… 'cause Annie was shouting, and my dad comes running out, picks us up, there's blood going everywhere, and an old lady comes… again, part of the family, I can't remember which one it was, but an old lady comes out, says, "What's the soft bugger crying about now? What's the matter with him?" And our dad says, "Put your tongue out, Bill." And I sort of put it out, and half of it falls out, and she fainted in the snow (laughs).

[01:25:46]

**This was the neighbour?**

B Yeah. Well, we were all… we were all living in each other's pockets in them days. But I've still got… you can see it, the scar right across, it chopped my ruddy tongue off with my teeth. I learnt not to stick my tongue out after that.

**What was her name, the lady who fainted?**

B I can't remember. I can't remember. It was er…

D Alzheimer's.

B You don't remember who it was, do you, who was the one that told me what's the silly bug- ? What's the… ?

D Yowling?

B Yeah.

D Er… "Put thee tongue out [inaud]" [01:26:21] (laughs).

B "What's the soft bugger yelling over now?"

D It wasn't Col Jones, was it?

B No, no. It was a lady.

[01:26:27]

**It's alright. It's alright.**

B I can't remember who it was.

D "Aye, stick thee tongue out."

B I was nobut young. I was nobut young. (D and B laugh). I remember it well.

[01:26:39]

**Do you want to have a little coffee break, and then start again?**

B I'm ready for a break any time.

D I think she's brewing now.

**Yeah, she said she was. I mean – yeah.**

B You've had enough, have you?

**No, no, no.** (B laughs)

D She needs a pee.

[tape turns off and then on]

[01:26:57]

**So we were just talking about horses, and you said you had your own horse, Bill?**

Well, colloquially speaking. One was allocated to me, yeah. I mean, it was er… when I was young, obviously little, I could just about do the man's job, but you

had to be careful. And so I was awarded Tom, who was the biggest horse we had. He was also the most stolid (laughs). You know, you couldn't get the bugger to trot, no matter how hard you persuaded it.

D You could climb up its tail.

B So Tom was my horse and that was by default. So on a Saturday, when I got a little bit older, when my dad was at Kendal, and I'd be going with my grandfather, I would use one of the other horses, 'cause they were a bit more lively. But colloquially, Tom was my horse. That's all it was.

[01:27:52]

**Did you have a horse, Derek?**

D No.

B He doesn't shout loud enough to get a horse.

D (laughs) I don't want bloody horses. They bite at one end and kick at the other.

B He's got a very… he's very sympathetic mechanically.

D Yeah.

B I mean, horses would break. I'm not saying he's an animal, but he's closely related.

[01:28:14]

**So how many horses did the family have?**

B Five or six at any one time.

D Yeah, at different times. It depended how many there was working int' firm at t'time.

B The thing is, they used to buy 'em generally from Morecambe. The landows (ph) [01:28:31], the Morecambe Dodge (ph) [01:28:31]. So the type of horse was called a light vanner. Don't ask me how… I mean, there's Clydesdales and all sorts of other things, but light vanners are a sort of a style of horse, where they're a powerful horse, but they're fairly light, and they have fairly clean feet. Instead of having very hairy fetlocks and things, they're fairly clean, so again -

D On the sand -

B On the sand and in the water, there's not a lot of drag for 'em. So they were just called light vanners. They're the same sort of horse that was used on the Morecambe Dodge for tourists with the landows (ph) [01:29:10]. And obviously, there'd be gypsy connections there and one thing and another, so it was already… the horses were always moving through, and that's where we'd go looking at horses and buy 'em there. And when they were a bit old or they were getting tired, or they had problems or whatever, they'd be sold on for some other reason from us.

D Glue (laughs).

B Well, I wouldn't go quite so far as to say that, but erm…

D Eventually.

B They used to have quite a good life. It would be quite busy from time to time, because, as we've said, it's not a steady job. It's when there's shrimps there, or when there's flukes, or when there's whatever, you go and catch 'em. And at certain times o' year, it'd be two tides a day. And one horse can't do two tides a day. So…

D Well, it can, but not for very long.

B So you rotated 'em. And so generally, they're on holiday, until there's a burst of activity. And o' course they get well fed. And when the weather's not good, they're inside. And er… it might be boring for the poor beggars but -

D They were well looked after because they were a tool. They weren't looked after because they were a pet.

B How come you don't look after your tractor then? [J laughs]

D I can go up that hill and it'll start. In between times, I don't have to feed it. I don't have to muck it out. I don't have to bloody get a vet to it or any o' that, trim its nose or owt, it's just go, hit it wi' a hammer, and it'll start.

[01:30:45]

**Did they have personalities?**

D Yes.

B Yes. Yes, they did.

D Nasty buggers [laughs].

B Tom was a case in point. He was funny. He didn't have a nasty bone in its body, but it was a big horse. And when you had it in its boots in the stable, you would go alongside it and give it some oats or whatever, and be feeding it into its manger, or pull something down from the loft into its hay rack in front of it. And then it'd be eating, and you'd start to walk out, and it would just move across and have you pinned against the ruddy wall!

D For ten minutes.

B (laughs) It would just be leaning on you, not very heavy, but you're struggling and you're trying to shove the thing, and it'd just do it on purpose. It wasn't being nasty.

J It wanted company.

B It wanted company, probably.

D One of the best laughs I remember was, when they got back from shrimping, what they used to do was disconnect the cart, so's that the horse isn't stood there with a cart on it all the time. But they didn't have time to take all t' harnesses off. They'd disconnect it from t'cart, then get on wi' boiling shrimps and suchlike. And our mother, on a regular basis, when t'horse was out, used to come out with crust off t'end o' loaf and feed it. And er… bloody horses obviously get used to this, and mother wasn't there one day, I think she'd gone down t' shop or summat and left back door open. So the bloody horse… and it steps down into t'kitchen. The bloody horse had gone down into t'kitchen.

B And got stuck.

D A long, narrow, corridor-type kitchen. And they don't like going backwards up steps. And there was no room for it to reverse (laughs). No room to turn round.

No room for anything. There was our father and grandfather smacking t'hell out of it wi' hats (ph) [01:32:39]. Hats on nose, on its face, to make it go backwards, the bloody thing. Oh, it was a… I thought that was funny at t'time (D and J laugh). Probably doesn't sound that much fun but -

J Went to help itself, did it?

D What?

J Went to help itself.

D Aye, it was looking for, "Where's my crust of bread?" Aye.

[01:32:56]

**Was it a close-knit community?**

D Yes.

B You had your hands round somebody else's throat, yeah!

D There was a lot of fighting, but if ever you needed owt, there was help available. But it may or may not have been with somebody that you had an ongoing feud with.

B I mean… you laugh at these things, and they weren't particularly serious in the sense that it wasn't the wild west. It was worse than that. (D laughs) But as he says, you know, out on the sand, and particularly when you get into t'mechanical age, if the tractor stops, for whatever reason, you've a long walk and you're leaving a lot of money behind. And anybody, even your worst enemy, would pull

you home. And that's why you usually go in twos and threes, rather than ones. Although you do go in ones and er… yeah, that was a -

J There was a bit of rivalry, wasn't there?

B There was a lot of rivalry.

J Nobody could stand to see anybody – I mean, they could make their minds up they weren't going to the sand, but if one person went, then everybody else had to go, 'cause they were frightened of missing something.

B This is the thing. It used to be, when we were using horses, you used to… "When's it sand time? When's it time to go?" And it's four hours after high water, roughly. Four hours after high water. So everybody has their tide tables, they know when it's high water, so they know when they're going. And a quarter of an hour before four hours, you'll hear a tractor start up somewhere. "Brrrrrr!" So next thing, it's like -

D Brum brum brum brum! They're off!

B (laughs) Everybody's gone! It doesn't really matter if it's three hours or whatever, but it won't be a minute after four hours. Everybody's – And the whole reason for waiting is because when you get there, you can't start shrimping until the tide's back far enough and the water's slowed down enough for you to be able to [inaud] [01:34:53].

D Well, you can, actually, but what the problem is, if you leave it later, everything's got more concentrated. The water's… the channels are a lot narrower, so you can actually cover a lot more of it. You can still start earlier, as long as you don't put your gear into [inaud] [01:35:08].

B There's two problems with that.

D But the problem with that is it chases (ph) [01:35:12] them out for when, at the end of the tide, when they should be good, you've already disturbed 'em all. So…

B There's all sorts o' -

D Yeah, aye.

B – folklore and one thing and another. But yes, there was a lot of rivalry. And the odd times when tractors were run into other tractors, and ropes were run over and things, so that…

D Nets were parked on.

B Aye (laughs). There was always a funny… a few bits o' goings on.

J I think most people were related, one way or another, weren't they, going back to sort of granddad's day?

D Just about everybody, aye.

B Aye.

J They were big families and sort of… one would marry somebody out of another family and -

D As we say, there'd be a family business with quite a lot in it, but there'd also be another arm, with another family business with quite a lot in it. And, you know, a little bit of interaction, I suppose.

[01:36:06]

**Between the businesses?**

D Between the two. But more rivalry than interaction most of the time (J laughs).

B Yes.

[01:36:15]

**Can you tell me any incidents? Like, you mentioned tractors being run into. Are there any particular stories that you remember?**

B No, no, no. Not the deliberate sort of things. They were just sort of incidentals as you went along. It was just rivalry that boiled over a few times. Everybody was greedy. I mean, the whole point was you were going to make money, and the more you caught, the more you got - the more money you made. So there was a profit motive. So there was loads of that.

D It's the old saying – "if you're not greedy, you'll never make a good fisherman". That was a prerequisite. If you're not greedy, you might as well not start (laughs).

B But there would always be plenty of people who would give you a hand if you had a problem, and you would always do the same. (laughing) I can remember once, my dad got stuck down at er… er... off Heysham.

D What, both tractors?

B No.

D Oh, no, that's a different time.

B No, I'll come to that, I'll come to that. He got stuck.

D Ali Bally (ph).

B And there was only me and him there. So he wanted me to hook up to him. He was stuck in some soft sand, and wanted us to hook up to him. And er… technically, the shorter the rope, the better the pull. You want a short odd (ph) [01:37:42]. A short odd. Now, part of that might be that you fasten it as low down as you can on the one that's stuck.

D Try and lift it.

B So it's tending to lift as well as pull. Whereas if you're pulling from a long distance, you're just pulling. So on this occasion, I was the only other tractor there. "Come on, back up, back up!" I was saying, "It's bloody soft! Get it fastened -" "Back up! Back up! Back up!" Well, they're his tractors. So I backed up, he fastened it up, he jumps on the tractor and got that one stuck as well (J chuckles). So er… So we...

D I was there that morning. We walked it and Cedric picked us up about half a mile from t'shore, if I remember.

B Well, the bottom line was that the tide went over the top of both tractors. So we had to go back with… well, we only had three tractors at the time, so one of ours and several mates', and we got 'em out. And one of 'em, the front axle stayed in the sand. We pulled the tractor off it and it snapped the casting on the front.

D One had been rolled over upside down.

B Well, sometimes you have to roll them over to get ‘em to come out. But er… you see, the trouble with sand, it’s soft -

D And it sets.

B - and it’s muddy, and it goes… you know, the tractors are vibrating with them running – brum brum brum brum brum.

D Chases (ph) [01:38:58] the water out.

B So it tends to liquidise the sand, and lets the tractor sink into it. And then at some ruddy point, despite the vibrations, it just sort of sets.

D It chases the water out.

B It does, ‘cause it’s actually fluidising the sand in the water, that’s how it goes liquid and lets it drop in, and at some point it decides it doesn’t wanna be liquified anymore and it just… the water disappears, and it sets.

D Again, it’s your basic physics (laughs).

B Again, it’s not setting like concrete, but as the tractor wheel turns, it just sort of skids through it, it doesn’t lift. ‘Cause you’ve now got the belly down on the sand -

D Can’t put the weight on the tread.

B – and there’s no weight on the actual tread, exactly. You’ve got the belly on the sand, so nothing pushing the tread in. So all it does is just dig itself a bigger hole. So it was always… you always had a little bit of a worry, and particularly if the tractor started misfiring (laughs), which they did.

D And still do (laughs).

B Yeah. (pause) I … I have another little story, but it'll have to be off the record, that one (B and J laugh).

[01:40:11]

D Back in the early days of er… when it was still wire rope... you remember west channel and west odd (ph) [01:40:20]?

B Mm.

D There was a hill between 'em. And at various times, the hill could be -

B Aye, not so wide! (laughs)

D – anything from 50 yards wide to half a mile wide, depending on the different things that were going on.

B I know where he's coming from now.

D And Brian Shaw… I was down shrimping and -

B – who's just died.

D He died about a couple o' month or three month ago, summat like that. But anyway, there were several of us down there that day. But I'd had my first shot down, and I was pulling round to go back up. And as it went over the hill, there was a lot o' little gulleys. You know how it used to make them little sort of six inch bracks (ph)? Gulley bracks (ph). [01:41:07]

B Mm.

D And as it went over the hill, it “bump bump bump bump”, dropped the bloody nets off the back. And tractor starts pulling. “Shit.” So I scooted round. And luckily I parked the tractor at the front of the chassis, out the way. And I’m busy picking my nets up and putting back on, when I heard “Rumble, rumble, rumble,” look round, there’s this bloody chassis coming! You couldn’t see Brian’s tractor anywhere.

B It was over the hump (laughs).

D It was over the hill. This bloody chassis comes hurtling forwards, and I tell you what, if you’d set it up with a bloody tape measure and set square, you couldn’t have got it any more central. It just went “smack” into arse o’ my chassis. His nets came forward instead o’ back. A bloody great cloud o’ smoke went up over ‘hill as his tractor damn near turned over wi’ his skidding sideways, and he comes hurtling over the top on his tractor to see what’s happened. Well, I was nobbut a kid and er… Brian was my dad’s age. And he climbed off the tractor and he was going (hyperventilates). I thought he was having a bloody heart attack, I’d never heard him laugh before (all laugh uproariously). I was keeping t’chassis between me an’ him because I thought, “He’s either gonna bloody kill me or what!” (hyperventilates) That was how he laughed! A real nice fellow, like, you know. After we finished laughing, we untangled everything and bloody… away we went. But yeah, if you’d 144 square miles of sand, you could not… and what, 6 mile out, somewhere about there? You couldn’t have got it any more bloody accurate if you’d had it… Smack into t’back end of it!

[01:42:44]

B Brian had had a bad motorbike accident when he was young, where a cousin of me dad was with him, and the cousin got killed. Pippy Eisner (ph) [01:42:55] got killed. And Jack -

D Brian.

B Brian Shaw got very bad leg injuries. So he was not exactly a cripple for the rest of his… well, he was a cripple for the rest of his life, but he worked normally, but he had a lot of trouble with his legs re-

D He always had ulcers on 'em, didn't he? Bone ulcers.

B Well, it wasn't just that. He kept re-breaking… His leg kept re-breaking and things like that. Remind me about Sandgate (ph) [01:43:18] after that.

D [inaud] [01:43:23] upside down? (laughs)

B Er… but he was a bolshy bugger, was Brian. And I can remember one of these times where we'd all rushed to the far… what we called the far end, when you get there and you just rush into the shallow water and you're dropping all your gear off. And I'm just about getting ready for setting off, and Brian and somebody else comes over the hill and just pulls in 100 yards in front of me. Well, you can't do that.

D It's very frowned upon but er… What they used to do was gauge the length of your rope and give theirselves another 50 yards so's that they'd get down in front (laughs).

B Well, but the bottom line was, at this point, you see, I set off to get… they'd be 100 yards or so down from me and I'd got nearly 200 yards of rope, so I goes rushing off down, and water flying everywhere 'cause you're in 18 inches of

water, and I'm going as fast as I can, pull this [inaud] [01:44:14] down, and I go down the inside of… and there's Brian waving his arms and doing this, that and the other. And next thing, he's driving his tractor out into the water, over my rope that's going down, so I couldn't set off. And oh, this went on. And we had quite a little… and he was dancing round… I can't remember all the details, but at one point, where we had the tractors together, he was off the tractor and prancing around knee-deep in water, "Come on, come on! I'll fight you if you like!" (laughs) It was a right laugh, was that. And er… 'cause I was only a schoolboy and he was a full time fisherman, you see. So I suppose he had a little bit of seniority. But I got there first! (B and J laugh).

D It's 'cause he went too early (laughs).

B And what I was trying to say… what I was gonna say, remind me about Sandgate, was that the same Brian, er… years later, was coming off the shore at the back here, and as you come off the shore onto the road, it's quite a little lift. And in those days, it was perhaps worse than it is now, well, a lot worse, 'cause they've widened it now, and it was just a narrow little gap. And the tarmac would break off, and of course the sea would wash it, so it was always a bit of a jump. So you'd come on, and he was coming off one day, he's got his tractor, he's left his chassis on the shore, 'cause you don't need to bring them home, it's better if you don't, at lower tides anyway. And er… he was coming round off the shore and up onto 'road, and hits this big bump. And his boxes of shrimps, which are on the backboard o' the tractor, were starting to jump off backwards. So he had to sort of get hold and hold the boxes. Tractor sort of got away on him a little bit and hit the bank at the side, rolled the tractor over. There he was, trapped upside down underneath the tractor. And er…

D Couldn't just reach the diesel tap to switch it off (laughs).

B Well, never mind the rescue -

D Because it runs for about 15 minutes.

B Never mind the details of it. The rescue took quite a long while to get the tractor off, because they didn't have roll bars in them days.

D Still don't.

B So I mean, he was lucky he wasn't just squashed. But he was stuck between the er…

D Between… down by 'throttle, wasn't it?

B You've two mudguards, the seat, and the steering wheel-cum-tractor. And you've just got two gaps where you can get out either side.

D And he was stuck down 'left-hand side.

B He was trapped in there. Because of his bad legs, of course, he wouldn't be very agile at getting out. And anyway, he broke a leg again in that. But er… bit of a character was Shawsy.

D Ah… he was alright, was Brian.

B Yeah.

[01:46:53]

D One tide… I'd be 16, 17 maybe. Getting on. I wasn't a young 'un anymore but er… Set off shrimping early morning, foggy as buggery. We got down t'bottom, bottom of Mile Road, and there was three of us. There was me, Brian and Cedric.

And it was ums and ahs, ums and ahs. “Should we bother or should we not?” “Oh, well, go on, bugger it, we’ll give it a shot.” And the idea was, we were gonna go into ‘Klondyke, which is a big… over on the east side of the Bay. So we sets off travelling. And saying to [01:47:39] we’ve been going a long, long, long time. And I’m thinking, “Well, it must be a long, long, long, long time, because we’re only going very slow, you know? Surely we should be there by now.” Anyway, eventually we comes to ‘water, and hooks off and starts trawling. And it was just nicely breaking daylight and er… or it’d probably broken daylight. And sets off trawling and starts… tractor started j– “Oh,” I thought, “Shit, we’re full o’ muck.” Started pulling out, just then the fog rolled back, we were it’ west channel right opposite Bardsea Church! (J laughs). We were pulling up against the water! Supposed to be over int’ east and we were actually over int’ west. And that was… one was the official guide over the sands and the other was a guy that I’d say was ten times better than him. I just tagged on with ‘em and… yeah, it’s so bloody easy to get it wrong.

[01:48:35]

**Even when you’ve got a lot of skill and experience.**

D It’s easy now, you just take a GPS. But in them days you had to know what you were doing. But yeah, that was… that was a bit educational.

B I can give you a similar one, but when that thing’s switched off (J laughs).

[01:48:53]

**So how did you learn to find your way across the sands?**

B It were learn or die (laughs).

D Yeah, it's just if you go often enough, you find out where you are.

B Yeah. One of the things, if you go often enough, is in those days people were going regularly.

D So there'd be a track [?] [01:49:15].

B And you might or might not realise it, but there's a lot o' sand out there, sometimes there's a bit o' water. And water tends to make ridges on it. However, when you go out with a tractor, you leave two lines. And when you come back, you leave two lines, and so does anybody else. And one tide going over it doesn't actually take that off. You don't get the lines -

D Depending where you are.

B Well, largely.

D On the tops, it stays.

B You get miles of where there's just a shiny… a shiny path. It doesn't show you as a road, it doesn't show you as wheel marks.

D It's just two little dips.

B But where wheel marks have been, you get like a different texture in the sand. And if you recognise it, it's a road.

D All it is is the light hitting it from a different angle, and it shows up [inaud] [01:50:02].

B Well, it's a different angle to the light, but there you go. The light's the same angle either side of it. But you get a shiny path. And it's the same for shrimping at night. You can see quite clearly… You can't see a bloody thing really, but you can see quite clearly in starlight where there's a silver ribbon, which is where people have been earlier in the day on the day tide, or even a day or two ago.

D Which used to be handy 30 years ago when there was 30 or 40 people going. Now there's 3, 4, 5 -

B It doesn't leave the same trail.

D You don't have the same sort of… but what you do have is probably the worst invention ever, the GPS. Because it's brilliant in some respects, it's absolutely tragic in others. I was first int' village to get a GPS, and I thought it was magic at the time, because if it was foggy, it didn't matter. You knew where you were going, you just plugged your course in and away you go. And for several years, I thought it was brilliant. And then when that cockle boom came and people came from all over the bloody world, and I mean all over the world, all they had to do was follow you once with a GPS and they've got the route there. So what it's taken you years to learn, they're just jumping on on the back of you, and they'll work right next to you and work your bed out. Which is er… rather annoying, to say the least. So, yes, at one time I thought they were a marvellous toy, were the GPS. They are, but they're also a bloody curse, because it means any nugget that hasn't the faintest idea can jump on a quad or a tractor and go. A perfect example of how stupid it can be was er… about 8 years ago, 8, 9 years ago during that last big er… cockle boom, as you might say, there was er… a lad from away had been working and using his quad and his GPS, following his same track backwards and forwards every day. And then he'd gone away for a fortnight, three weeks holiday. And er… came back early hours of the morning, going like hell following his GPS, and the channel had moved half a mile, and he just suddenly went (whistles) "glug" into about 15 foot o' water. Which we thought

was quite amusing but er… (laughs). But that's… That's an example of how a GPS can catch you out. But right up till then, you know, he's just following a track that was there 3 weeks, 6 weeks before. And all of a sudden, it isn't there anymore, there's a bloody channel there. So… yes, they are a marvellous toy, but you've still got to use a little bit of common sense when you're using 'em, where you're going. But er… yeah.

[01:52:52]

**I suppose it's… with you having that experience then, is it easier for you? Or erm… you're less likely… I guess are you saying it's more dangerous how that people have got… ?**

D It's no more dangerous for us, 'cause we've been doing it with or without.

**Yeah.**

D But what you get is people that rely totally on GPS.

**Yeah, that's what I was trying to say (laughs).**

D And you can't rely totally on a GPS because the channels change. So you use it as a guide to go in the right direction, especially when you're going homewards. But it's not the ultimate end of story. You've still got to use -

B The GPS doesn't show you the…

D The channels.

B If you're talking about channels, that's river channels, 'cause the rivers and the various main bits… but you get all sorts of drainage and tributaries and dykes and all sorts of things. It's like a different -

J It's shifting all the time.

B It's not a moonscape, because you tend to think moonscapes are round holes.

D Dry! (laughs)

B But it's all like little dykes here, there and everywhere. And all it is is water draining out of the sand -

D And it carves its own -

B - till it tops up next tide, and some of the sand gets reconstituted, some of it gets fluidised. When it drains again, it'll have moved maybe -

D Three foot. Two or three foot.

B Or not.

D Or ten foot.

B Or the other way. But over a period, you can talk miles.

D Over a… well, over a period of a month, the main channel might move from one side of Chapel Island to the other. And you're talking only quarter of a mile and that's at the top of the Bay. You get down the bottom there and it can -

B It’s meandering all over the place. And your GPS doesn’t show you these little things. I mean, you look on a map, an OS map of Morecambe Bay, and you’ll find -

D It’s completely wrong.

B It’s got the Lune Deep and the Leven Channel...

D The Lune Deep stays static, but that’s about it.

B Well, of course it does, but what I’m saying, you look on the map, and it’s got the Lune Deep, it’s got the river this and the river that -

D And then it comes to a block where it says ‘Some local [inaud]’ [01:54:58](laughs).

B And it shows some sort of channels and things, and it shows some sort of topography of the Bay.

D At the time.

B But that’s the day they did it.

J Yes.

B And it’s not gonna be like that by the time they’ve got the map printed.

J Well, it’s like at Grange, isn’t it? I mean, the river used to be… The tide used to come right into the promenade -

D Grange Swimming Pool.

J And then it went out, and you got all that grass growing there over years and years.

B And now it's come back in again.

J And now it's moved back.

D Now it's buggered off back again now.

B Well, it's come in to 'north end a bit. North and east.

J So the channels come and go into different… slightly different ways.

B Yeah, it's near what's called the island now.

D Aye, it's gone back again.

B The channel has, but it's scoured the -

D Aye, it's already scoured it.

B It's scoured the marsh off.

D It's moved back again, has the channel.

B Yeah, yeah.

[01:55:43]

**So is it just through experience that you get to know these… ?**

B Yeah, you just make it up as you go along. (J and B laugh)

J Well, these people come cockling and they've never been here before.

D Yeah, well, that's what I say. All they do is they follow behind somebody that knows what they're doing, and the next day they've got it.

J And they're going all round the country, aren't they, so… ?

D Yeah, but as I say, they've got it on GPS -

J I'm not saying it's safe [?] [01:56:05].

B When we were kids there wasn't any technology, but there was a lot of people following the sand.

J And they stayed in the same place, you see, didn't they? They would just fish their own area.

B Well, not necessarily.

D No, no, no.

B People get their own areas when it comes to fluking and one thing and another. Jack Manning and his dad used to do a lot of fluking at the top end of the Bay, where most folk wouldn't go that high up. But er… what I'm saying is, there was a lot of people doing it, and a lot of people had a lot of kids, and a lot of kids went with 'em. And a lot o' kids just… you don't learn, you just absorb it.

D It's part of growing up.

B And it's all part of… er… for whatever reason, I have a pretty good sense of direction. Whenever I go somewhere, I know which direction I'm pointing in. Er… I don't know necessarily where I am. But I know whether I should be going more left… She's hopeless (J laughs), but I generally have a good idea of where I'm going. She'll say, "Turn left here." I say, "No. It's not here. We're not far enough…" wherever, you know. And that's all come from playing around on the sand. 'Cause we used to do it in the dark, and er… it's quite funny how distances are different in the dark.

[01:57:18]

**How so?**

B Well, you always think you've got there, and you've still quite a long way to go. And you get used to allowing for that. Another thing is, is when you're looking over water - it's not just in this Bay, it's anywhere else - it never looks so far over water. But you take the water away and walk it, and you'll find it's a long way.

D Six weeks ago I had some nets out half a mile below Chapel Island. And er… one of the IFCA (Inshore Fisheries Conservation Area) Officers had decided to do a check on me. And that particular day I was running about a quarter of an hour late, for whatever reason. And er… he'd actually walked out and checked my nets before I got there. Which is part of his job, no major problem. But I saw him walking back as I was going out, so I just called round by him, and I said, "Go on then, Ian, tell me what I've got that I shouldn't have." And he said, "Well, no," he says, er… "All you've got is flukes and plenty of 'em." I said, "Oh, well, that's a bit of a shame." He said, "It's further out here than you think, in't it?" And I said, "No, it's exactly the same distance as it was yesterday and the day before." I says, "It's you that don't come so bloody often!" (laughs) But aye, "It's further out here than you think." And he's one of the guys that actually do quite regularly,

I’m not saying very regularly, but do quite regularly have a walk out, or he’ll take a quad out or whatever.

B Mm. Well, it’s the same -

D It is a big expanse out there.

B Yeah. When we were going with horses, four hours before… four hours after high water, and you’d go. And horses walk, depending on what the…

D ...topography is…

B ...topography, yeah, or what they’re doing, generally somewhere between 5 and 8 mile an hour. Er... on level ground it could be towards the eight. Well, it used to take us anything between an hour and an hour and a half to where we were going. I mean, if you're going really down to Heysham, a couple of hours. If you're going up to Chapel Island, less than an hour. But you know what I mean. It’s going to be an hour of a horse walking quite quickly. And that’s a long way. But you don’t actually feel as though you’ve gone that far. And when you're looking across at Heysham, it looks as though it’s on your doorstep from here, doesn’t it?

J Well, it’s difference of days, isn’t it? Some days it looks a long way, some days it looks close.

B It’s a long way. You can work it out on the map how far it is, if you like (laughs). But that power station looks as though it’s at the bottom o’ the garden.

You just get used to it. You don’t learn it, you absorb it. And hopefully you don’t forget it, 'cause one day I might need it again (B and J laugh).

[02:00:10]

**You mentioned a fisherman who used to fish with one leg and one arm.**

B Yes. Yeah, Tommy Benson.

**Can you tell me a bit more about him?**

B Well, I don't know a lot more about him. He's just er… I don't even know, going back beyond him, whether they were a fishing family at all. It's just that he was a fisherman, and as I say, he was a red beret in the Second World War, stepped on a landmine and lost an arm and a leg. He came back and he got a metal leg, and a stumpy arm with a hook on it, which screwed out, so he could have various different things on the end.

D Put a socket [?] [02:00:49] on or have a ratchet set on or… (laughs).

B And he had one of these little Inva… he had a little Inva carriage.

D One of the little blue three-wheelers.

B Yeah, a little blue Inva carriage.

D And it had a little ball on the steering wheel, so he used to just -

B – clamp his ball onto it.

D - clamp on and that was him steering.

B So he was mobile. This was… This was before most… Well, very few people had cars, and others would have motorbikes. Well, he obviously wasn't gonna be

riding motorbikes. But there wasn't cars like there is now. But he had his Inva carriage. So… I can't remember, some sort of 2 stroke engine but… 'cause it always smoked. But he was pottering around with that. But he was a brilliant engineer. He worked in er…

D Vickers.

B Brilliant practical engineer, rather than theoretical engineer. And er…

D He could make damn near anything work.

B Mm. But he learned his trade obviously in t'shipyard, and er… did a lot about bringing about the users of… we used to call them tra-la-las in them days. Er… Austin 16 or Austin 12 chassis. This is in the days where cars were a chassis with a front and back axle and then a body put onto it. Not like nowadays, where you have a pressed steel monocoque body and bolt things to it. Er… you don't have axles and you don't have chassis. But we used to strip off all the bodywork.

D Took everything away except the chassis and the wheels.

B Everything except the chassis, the wheels and the steering. You wanted the steering, because when the tractor is towing it, you would have the steering loose and it would just follow the tractor. But when you were shrimping, you would just turn the steering a few degrees to one side or the other. If you're going down the left side of the channel, you would turn the steering less than 10 degrees to the right and fix it, and then it would pull away from you and go into the water. When it gets to the limit of your rope, then the tractor would wing [?] [02:02:50], and it would pull it slightly sideways as it went down. But if you were trawling the other way, well, of course you'd turn it… if you were on the east river, you'd turn it the other way. But all this lot was worked out from… not exactly on a piece of paper

from first principles, but by cutting and trying. And Tommy Benson was right at the front o' that.

D Mm. Ali Baba was one that used to do most o' [inaud] [02:03:17] and Tommy did…

B … mods.

D Did all the modifications.

**What does that mean, sorry?**

D Sorry?

**So Ali - ?**

D His brother, Alan, his nickname was Ali Baba, he was the one that used to go out and trial the gear more often. Albert did a bit but -

B Well, I think in those days, and I might be wrong about this, but I think in those days, they weren't what you might call full time fishermen who relied on it.

D No.

B They were sort of like…

D Part time.

B Tommy was a professional engineer. And I'm not quite sure what Albert and Ali were.

D Ali was [inaud] [02:03:52].

B But they, as he says, Tommy would have this idea. Between ‘em they would make it. And then they’d go and try it and come back and feed back, modify this, modify that, and you’d finish up that you actually have a towbar, erm… about 15 inches behind the front wheel, that goes across the chassis, with an eye at either end of it. And that’s where you tow it from when it’s working, on your rope.

D On you're sideways [?] [02:04:19], rather than when you're behind your tractor.

B When it’s behind the tractor, it has a drawbar, but you lift your drawbar up and fasten it so it can’t fall down. And then you tow it from each side.

D One side or the other [?] [02:04:33].

B But from about 18 inches behind the wheel, and it’s quite critical, that distance.

D Whether or not it’ll pull in straight or just drag [inaud] [02:04:41].

B Well, the point is, if it’s too close to the front wheel, it won’t pull the weight of the rope. And in the early days, it was wire rope, so it was bloody heavy – 200 yards of half inch steel wire was heavy. And so you needed to have the pull-bar further back. And then later, when we went onto Courlene, which actually floats -

D Polypropylene.

B Well, polypropylene, Courlene, it’s all the same stuff… er… it’s a lot lighter, and so you would actually pull it from a little bit further in front. But all that lot, we developed. They were right at the front of it. They invented it in the first place, and then everybody and his dog gets involved and develops it. So you get er…

you get an understanding of why it happens. But somebody had to think about it in the first place.

D And that system has been exported all over the bloody world. They actually had Nigerian fishery officers came and spent a summer here – this is a lot of years ago – came and spent a summer here, learning how to fish with tractors. Er… that's a lot o' years ago. Erm… we exported it… our father and Albert and Ali, they took two outfits down to Southport. Southport, historically, they'd always… when they moved into the mechanised area, they'd used cut-down wagon beds, but they could only go in so deep, because they weren't using chassis. And when it was windy and waves, they couldn't go. Well, the best time to go is when it's windy and waves.

B 'Cause it's muddy!

D 'Cause there's a lot of mud in the water and the shrimps can't see the net coming.

So we were down there, and on an average day, there'd be X number of them out, and two or three of us. Well, we could go into deeper water than they could anyway, because it was the chassis and not the tractor that was going in the depths. So they were getting quite miffed about this.

[02:06:43]

**Was this in Southport?**

D This is at Southport. And then on bad days, they couldn't go because they just couldn't get into the water that they needed to be in, and that was the days that we were having bloody bonanzas. So…

B And if you go to Southport now, they're still at it. Still at it, same as we are here.

D Yeah, yeah.

B So...

[02:07:08]

**So it was developed as a community?**

D Yeah.

B Effectively, yeah. But as he says -

D Everybody had their own ideas.

B It was exported, but only by accident. You didn't sold the technology. What you did was you'd go and have a go at somebody else's shrimps. And o' course, it's a bit like the GPS. You've then shown 'em how to do it, so they can make their own tractors and -

D Once they find out how to do it, they jump on the bandwagon and away they go. But you can't blame 'em for that, because we were effectively poaching their stocks. But er… you get bloody upset when somebody else comes and does it to us (laughs uproariously).

B And for what it's worth, while we're still on-record, yes, it's time the Sea Fisheries did something about all this bloody cockling. The… the cockles have lasted here for generations. Nobody ever needed to shut the beds.

D Nope.

B Because the fishermen knew when they were mature and they weren't, and they did the right thing. And they kept their livelihood going, year in, year out. Good years and bad years, but year in, year out. Now you get the whole world coming here, and the whole beds in any part of the estuary are worked out in a matter of days. And then it's two or three years before they're back up for locals to be able to make their living.

D Eight years the last time. We only just started again last year, for the first time in eight years. And that's an absolute bloody travesty, because there was seasons in that eight years that you could've had good dos among the cockles. But the fishery's idea is, there must be an overall volume of shellfish in the area. But they've got the wrong bloody idea. They count the whole 144 square miles as viable sand. It isn't. There's only a very small proportion o' that that can hold cockles.

B Suitable for cockles.

D The other thing is, they always say, there's a third… must remain at least a third for stock for breeding, another third for the birds, and the final third, you can probably allow the fishermen to take. And as I said to one of the lady bloody scientists a couple o' years ago while we were down there discussing it, we were looking round, and I said to her, I said, "Have a look round." I said, "How many -?" She'd said to me we've got to have all these for the birds. I said, "Look round, and how many birds are there? There's loads, there's bloody thousands of 'em." I said, "Now have another look round and tell me how many fishermen there are." I said, "The only endangered species down there is the bloody fisherman, 'cause they won't let 'em fish!" (J laughs). And I was little bit more forthright than that. But er… it's absolutely bloody true. It's quite obvious if you're working a bed, once they start "There's one there and one there and one there and one there,"

it’s not commercially viable. You’re gonna spend more bloody time looking for – so you give up, or you go and find a better place. The birds are quite happy to walk from here to there to there to there, 'cause they have about 20-30 per [inaud] [02:15:10] each. If you multiply that by the Bay, they’re taking tens of thousands o’ bloody tons. But we’re only allowed to take a few hundred.

B I showed you the picture of er… two people with a jumbo, and my granddad who was picking ‘em up with a craam. We used to go for setting baulk nets for flukes and one thing and another, and he’d have a cockle basket, and he’d just wander around, and he’d just be flicking ‘em in, one at a time with his craam, into the basket without ever using a jumbo. Get a basket full of cockles and that would do for the family or whatever, and we’d come home. Well, that was a by-product. But he could find cockles anywhere. But that’s 'cause there were cockles anywhere, because there was only -

D There still are! There still are!

B But there was only local families who were -

D Prosecuted for fishing.

B They call it husbanding ‘em, but same as you farm, you know, you grow as much as you can, but you put cow muck and stuff back onto it. Well, it’s the same with the shore. You don’t actually put the cow muck on it, but you leave bits alone for a while, while the fish get mature. But nowadays you – we, locals, have absolutely no control over it. In fact, we as locals have to get a permit to go fishing what our forefathers had been doing for bloody centuries.

D I sent a cheque off… in fact, I haven’t sent it off, it’s in the envelope, 500 quid I have to pay to be able to go to cockle - IF they open the beds. If they decide that there isn’t enough there to open the beds, I’ve still to pay that 500 quid, because

if I don't, I lose my licence. And if you lose your licence and then you apply for one, you go to the back of the waiting list. And there's half o' Liverpool on the waiting list, there's half o' the bloody east coast on the waiting list -

B Most of Hong Kong (J and B laugh).

D Well, no, they get given 'em (all laugh). And t' Polish. It really is absolutely bloody ridiculous. Which I've been to various meetings and explained that I have to pay best part o' 4000 quid -

B [into tape recorder] I hope you're listening to this.

D 4000 quid to not catch a cockle!

B So moving swiftly on… (all laugh).

[02:12:14]

**So you were saying -**

D And! And you're not allowed to go cockling unless you've got a bloody load of safety certificates -

B I have a sock somewhere!

D – which when they first set up this safety bloody scheme, it was put together by somebody at t'Sea Fisheries or they commissioned somebody. They then put it to the fishermen. Daft as it sounds, I got landed with the job of checking it through to see whether it was sensible or not.

B That was a mistake.

D So I agreed with about a third of it, totally disregarded about a third of it, and added my third on. And it went back, and it went backwards and forwards several times. And then they came up with what they decided was the end product. And then they very kindly charged me 40 quid to go and sit the test that I'd helped 'em bloody set! Bastards.

J (laughs) Oh dear.

D I wasn't happy about that.

B So… as we said, moving swiftly on… (all laugh)

[02:13:14]

**You were saying that cockling was very hard work?**

D It is, if you do it properly.

B Yes. It's hard work, yes.

D It's very easy if you cheat and use a mechanical dredge. But the problem with a mechanical dredge is, alright, they'll catch a lot when there's a lot, but they'll also catch a lot when they're only dotted about.

B But we don't have mechanical dredges.

D We do not agree with mechanical dredges.

B We do not have. But that's not the point. It starts with one cockle at a time.

D Which is how it should be [?] [02:13:45].

B With one man, with one little craam, with three little teeth… three little…

D Arms. A craam.

B Like a fork. And you're just flicking them out o' the sand into his cockle basket. And when he's got his cockle basket half full or whatever, he'll find some water and he'll just -

D Wash 'em off.

B Bounce it up and down a few times to wash the sand off. Then they'll go into a bag. And you move on and do a bit more.

D No, no, no, no. Then they go into 'riddle, then into 'bag.

J Why, 'cause you only catch certain sizes?

D [inaud] [02:14:14].

B In the good old days, when picking 'em one at a time, you only pick the decent sized ones up. So you're talking of nowadays you riddle 'em. In them days, you didn't pick little ones up.

D When we were… when I was craaming with our father, we used to riddle.

B Our grandfather was much better than you two then.

D Well, obviously.

(J laughs)

D Obviously.

B So there you go. And then moving on from that, you would er… because that was a skill – because you can't see these things in the sand, they're not sitting on top of the sand, there's just a little bleed-hole where they're breathing through – and somebody like my grandfather could see them a mile off and he's just flicking… he's wandering around flicking 'em up one after t'other, continuous movement.

D At certain times of year, there's like a moss grows on the shell.

B Well, the moss sticks out the little hole.

D And the moss is out of the sand. So anybody can see… you go and get 'em with moss in [?] [02:15:05] and anybody can go and do that. You could go with your bloody craam and get yourself a pan full.

B But the actual cockle -

**[02:15:11] [End of Track 1]**

**Track 2**

B -visible, that's the point.

D The shell is underwater, but this little fern is above the sand. But what he's talking about, getting 'em the what they call 'eyes' is they're a siphoned feeder.

B Mm.

D And as the tide goes off, the siphon comes down, and it leaves a little saucer shape where... the hole where they've gone down. And it's very, very, very difficult to spot the hole where the siphon used to be until you've got… I mean, I was cockling for bloody years before I could actually see 'em like that. And er -

B Because there's no need by the time he was doing it, 'cause they move on and used jumbos.

D Yeah, fair comment.

B But jumbos go back for donkey's years as well. But all that is is a flat, heavy plank with two vertical handles, or vertical stands with horizontal handles on 'em at waist height. And you just wobble the board backwards and forwards, and then lift it and move it its width. And you very often have a foot on it as well, while you're wobbling it, and all that does is fluidise the sand, and as he's mentioned earlier, that floats the cockles up.

D So if you're battering that, you've to pick it up every time and put it down its own width. So that's where the hard work comes in. If you're picking it up -

B Not least because fluidised sand sucks very hard [sucks]. It doesn't want to move. And you try and lift it up, you're lifting that against powerful suction.

J There's regulations about the size and everything now, isn't there, Derek?

D Well, there always was, Jan. The size years ago when I was a kid was 4 foot 6, it's now 6 foot.

J Oh right, OK.

B So they're big men now.

D But yeah, it was 4 foot 6. And it's now 20 mill square for your riddle. I know our father's are allus 22. I don't know what it is in imperial, but probably 3 quarters of an inch.

[00:01:58]

**That was the size that they were or that was the regulation size?**

D That was the regulation size.

B 22 millimetres is 7 eighths of an inch.

D Right, well, our father's were allus above the 20 mill. And if you remember when there was a big bonanza over ont' west side there over t'other side, they were working out of Bardsea or Bakley (ph) [00:02:24]. And our father and Tan (ph) [00:02:27] were working using t'riddle and leaving mounds -

B Somebody else comes and picks 'em up!

D Scousers were coming along (B laughs) raking the lot up, and our father was jumping up and down shouting at the bloody fisheries "What you gonna do about this?" And… "Well, nowt, Les, because they're still legal."

[00:02:43]

**It was legal for them to - ?**

D It was legal, because we were… we've always left big enough so's that there's enough for the following season.

J 'Cause you're the ones that are going -

D 'Cause we want to go next year and the year after and the year after.

**Yeah, yeah.**

D Somebody coming from Liverpool doesn't give a shit whether there's anything next year or not. They're quite happy take the lot. And that's what happens.

B We moved swiftly on from this one, didn't we? [J laughs]

D Grrrr! I didn't bring us back [laughs].

B I'm sorry I brought that one up but there you go.

J You don't really want to know anymore about cockling (laughs).

B But just to let you know, there is a little bit of feeling about how the Sea Fisheries operate these days.

J How they manage the er…

B It's different from the days when me granddad was on that committee (laughs).

[00:03:24]

**So you were saying this was happening when your dad was still fishing?**

D Yeah, aye, it was, aye. Yeah. Well, you didn't have gangs coming in from afar in them days. I mean, it was local fishermen. Going back to when them pictures were taken, it was all local folk coming in off the farms possibly to help them out. 'Cause they used to send bloody wagon loads, train wagon loads out Cark station.

B Mm.

D There was a shunting yard at Cark. Where you got off the train, there used to be a shunting yard there 't'other side o' tracks.

B Well, there was also, this side o' the track as well, which was a cattle loading bit which is now a Jehova's Witness Kingdom Hall there now (laughs). Things have changed.

[00:04:07]

**Sorry, I thought you said that when your dad was fishing some scousers came and were taking the -**

D Yeah.

**Oh right, OK. So even as long ago as that.**

J Taking the small -

B He talks about scousers, but you've gotta remember that Liverpool and Southport sands join up, and there's fishing along there the same as there is here. And the same way as we would go around to Bardsea, we'd either cross the channel literally or go round by road and have a tractor and things round

there, or we might be at Silverdale or we might be at Southport, they would do the same.

D Mm.

B But they were professional fishing families.

D Not all of ‘em.

B Most of ‘em. Yeah, well, from Liverpool they were a bit less er… civilized but… (B and J laugh).

D Mm.

B The whole idea was to make money, and they wanted to make as much as they could in as short a time as possible, and tomorrow didn’t matter.

D They didn’t give a shit about next day’s crop.

B It did matter for us because we lived here.

J They just moved onto somewhere else tomorrow, didn’t they?

B But that’s all history, and we’ve moved swiftly on for the third time.

D That’s not history. It’ll start again in 3 weeks’ time.

J Oh dear.

D But anyway, that’s another ball game. ‘Cause the price has gone back up, and we are one o’ the two beds that are gonna be open.

B Not if Marion gets back with the message.

D She's recording bloody history. They're not gonna do bugger all about that.

B The future.

[00:05:33]

**Were there any superstitions connected to fishing?**

D When we were kids, nobody ever worked on a Sunday. They used to wait until bloody midnight before they'd set off. Our grandfather, Sunday suit, choked to death with bloody collar.

B I don't know about superstitions. But '6 days shalt thou labour and on the seventh do twice as much.'

D 'Cause t'others are at home to help you [both laugh].

B '6 days shalt thou labour and on the seventh do twice as much.'

D No, that was father's… Grandfather, they used to have Sundays off.

B Well, they did when we were really little.

D Aye, I remember that. Pacing, waiting for clock to tick so that they could go (laughs).

[00:06:15]

**Did they ever go to the pub, your dad and your granddad, or did they not have time?**

D Father never, no. He got fed up o' me grandfather, I think.

B Grandfather was a bit of a lad. (J laughs)

D Grandfather was a piss-head (laughs).

B He did a lot for this village. He did a lot for Sea Fisheries. But he had some… obviously through that he had a lot of mates, and he had a lot o' mates with some o' the big farmers round here. And 'cause all the big farmers round here would go hound trailing, fox hunting and one thing and another, and he went with 'em, and after a fox hunt he'd always finish up in a pub, then two days later he might land home (J laughs). So Grandmother Butler used to ground him a few times. So, yes. But I don't think that was superstition.

[00:06:55]

**No, no.**

J We've moved on.

B That was the pub (laughs).

**No, no. I've moved on from superstition.**

J I didn't know that about your granddad.

D Yes.

J He used to go with Phillipson, Frank Phillipson, ‘cause he was as bad. Frank Phillipson from t’biggest farm round here and…

D Who was one from Cark he used to get wi’ an’ all? Well, there was [inaud] [00:07:16] and Hill (ph) [00:07:17] and I can’t… Whiteman.

B Aye, aye.

D They used to go.

B So they had a little group. ‘Cause there wasn’t any entertainment when they were lads. So you’d got to forgive ‘em. They couldn’t play with a motorbike in the garage, could they?

D Ted Wilson at Cark.

J Your dad… they used to go dancing, didn’t they? Dances in the village hall.

B Yeah, my dad. Well, he was civilized because he married a South African (laughs).

D Ted quite regularly tells the story of their entertainment when they were kids was they’d come from Sandgate and sit outside ont’ cross outside pub waiting for ‘em all to come out and start fighting. (All laugh) That was their weekend’s entertainment.

B But they were civilized, ‘cause they used to fight outside. (D laughs)

[00:08:00]

**What sort of a woman was your grandmother?**

D An angel.

B The boss.

**Right.**

B Grandmother Butler.

D She was a bloody angel.

J She was very hardworking.

B Yeah, very hardworking. She worked herself to death. Grandfather Butler was quite clever obviously ‘cause he got on all the right committees, did a lot for the area, he did a lot for Sea Fisheries, and things were in better control and nick than they are now. But as just said, he might’ve had a little bit of a wild side. Well, no, he was easily led. I don’t think he had a wild side, except when he was throwing pitchforks at me (laughs). You could rile him. But Grand- held the job together. She would tell him what was what.

D She was bloody good was Grandma [?] [00:08:47].

B She was the boss. But she was as soft as a pudding as well, because as I say, we used to stay there on a Friday night, it’s only nextdoor, but we used to stay there because Mum and Dad were going to Kendal market very early in the morning, so we would stay wi’ grandparents nextdoor, and we always got pancakes for supper. Our mother wouldn’t make pancakes ‘cause we ate too many (laughs). We ate too many too fast. She couldn’t make ‘em fast enough.

[00:09:12]

**Do you remember anything else about her?**

B I can remember loads about her but…

D I can remember helping carry her home when she died.

J Giving you some money to go on a school trip (laughs).

B Yeah, that was… choir trip. I went on a choir trip to Southport, as luck would have it. And grandfather give us ten bob to go, and yeah, that was a lot o' money then. I don't think he had any change, you see, so I got a ten shilling note.

D My week's wage! More than!

B Well, that was my year's bloody wage, wasn't it, obviously, that was the choir trip. So he gives me this ten shilling, and then as I'm walking out the door, he says, "And think on tha spends it -" I'm going to a funfair. "Think on tha spends it wisely." And our grandmother says, "Thou silly old bugger!" and threw a cushion at him. (others laugh)

[00:10:01]

**Because he'd given you that ten - ?**

B No, because he told me to spend it wisely!

D Grandfather would've invested it behind her back. Invested it wisely.

B I was very much into aeroplanes, or at least the thought of aeroplanes, in them days. And Grandmother Butler, when we were a bit older, I can't remember the

circumstances now, but we were at Blackpool, and we went to Squires Gate, and she paid ten bob again for me to have a pleasure flight. So she was soft in some ways but very… I don't know if she was the business brain but she ran everything.

J She worked harder than anybody [?] [00:10:42] didn't she?

B Grandfather had his head screwed on.

[00:10:43]

**But she worked hard.**

B Very hard, yeah.

D Made their own blood puddings. Pigs and…

B Yeah, yeah. Grew the pigs and slaughtered our own pigs in the backyard. That was a bit traumatic, I'll tell you.

D It were alreet (laughs).

B And bleeding the pigs. But we all liked black puddings from the pigs' blood.

D That's it. Looked forward to it. Grandmother used to make them from scratch.

B Yeah. Her hands would be like a navvy's hands, or a coal miner's nearly.

J She looked after you kids.

B She looked after us lot and she did a lot of work.

D She looked after a lot of bloody kids. Christmas she used to dress herself up in Father Christmas outfit, pair o 'wellies, and she'd go and do full bloody village.

B She would, she'd go round the village as Father Christmas.

D An orange… what was it? An orange and summat else, I think.

B Sugar mouse.

D Just about every bloody kid.

B And this was for the village. And she used to come in our house, we were always terrified of Father Christmas. She had this bloody great beard on and one thing and another. And it all went wrong, somewhere I'd be about 5 or 6, and after she'd gone, I says to my dad, "Why has Father Christmas got Gran Butler's wellies on?" (all laugh)

[00:12:10]

**Did you know your other grandparents?**

B Yes, yes. Picture of them somewhere. They come from South Africa.

D They were originally from Yorkshire.

**OK, of course, yeah.**

J There's that one of your grandma and granddad there as well Bill.

D Aye, she was a good 'un was Grandma.

B That's the Chapmans, that's after they'd retired and come here. They lived in 47 Avondale Road, Durban.

**So they had nothing to do with fishing?**

B No.

J That's Granddad Butler and Grandma (?) Butler. And that's the house as it was back in the day, the one we just came past at the bottom of the hill.

[00:12:58]

**What about your mum? What was she like?**

B South African.

J She was a lady.

**How do you mean?**

D Oh, she'd obviously been brought up with them lot, and to a large extent thought she was a bit above I think, most o' time. But er… got dragged down, I guess (laughs).

[00:13:23]

**But she worked?**

D Yeah, she was picking shrimps. Picked one hell of a lot o' shrimps when shrimps was on, be sorting whitebait, weighing 'em up when it was bloody cold

and wet. I can't remember her ever actually going to sand, which I know my grandmother did when she was younger, going cockling and suchlike but…

J She went to market a lot.

D She did go to Kendal Market quite a bit. [Eating biscuits] [B comes back into the room]

[00:13:57]

**I was just asking what sort of a person your mother was?**

B Female?

**What sort of a personality?**

B She was South African [does the accent]. And she never forgot that she'd come from South Africa. She didn't speak… well, she had a bit of an accent.

J I think she had a twang right up until -

B Well, people say that but I never noticed it.

J Yeah, she did. She spoke nicely.

B She was a bit more… well, she thought, at least, she was a bit more refined than most of it. But she did her share in the day. And I can remember one thing that nobody else would do for us, we were little kids, and in our back yard, this was when we were too small to be going up and down the hill here, it's a hill up behind the house, with a little unmade road going up into the field alongside the greenhouses, so we've got about a hundred yards of slope coming down into the

yard. And we got a lot of snow, and it was too soft to sledge. But nobody would do anything about it, they're all too busy working, except our mother, who got a fish box, a bit o' rope at one end, and put a few bricks into it, and she went along lifting it, pulling it forward, and dropping it, and pulling it forward, and dropping it, and made us a sledge run.

J She'd probably never seen snow in South Africa.

B Well, I suppose snow was a bit of a novelty, but nevermind that, that was quite hard work. But it always strikes me in my mind, because I never saw our mother as a hard physical worker unlike everybody else in the family.

J She always did all the animals, didn't she? She was keen on all the animals.

B She was keen on animals, always keen on animals and birds.

J Pigs and the cows and…

B And she looked after pigs and things.

D She fed 'em 'appen.

B Well, that's what I say, looked after 'em. She didn't muck 'em out.

D No.

B I had to do that (laughs).

D Did you?

B Anything you've done, I did it before. In the days when [can't hear over everyone talking and laughing] [00:16:05].

**In the days what?**

B Oh, nevermind [laughs uproariously].

J You learnt very quickly to pass it on, Derek.

B Yes. Four years was… yes.

D Mm.

B The technology moved on, you see, so you had it easy.

D Yeah.

[00:16:19]

**I don't know if this is something you would've noticed as being children, but do you think it was difficult for your mum to fit in as an offcomer?**

D It would be.

B It would in some respects.

D She was half and half.

B And obviously we weren't there to be able to say. I can remember one thing, 'cause my dad was a bit of a bugger in some ways. I mean, we're all very refined

and we don't pull others' legs. (Others laugh gently) But our mother hadn't been here very long, and we were out for a walk -

J You haven't told her the bit where he's told everybody she was black when they were going to meet her off the train. (Others laugh uproariously).

B Yeah, everybody here thought… she's coming from South Africa, and everybody here, half the village was lined up to see her 'cause they thought she was black. (Laughter continues). Was she? Anyway…

D She hadn't been here very long…

B She hadn't been here very long, and they were out for a walk one Sunday evening, no doubt, and there was a big moon out. And she… (laughs) and she says, "Oh, look at the moon, it's lovely! But it looks quite different to what it does in South Africa." And our dad says, "Well, thou silly bugger, tha's looking at t'other side of it from here." And she said, "Oh, yes." (laughs) So she wasn't the brightest button in the cardigan.

[00:17:39]

**So your dad used to pull people's legs?**

B No, no, he would never pull anybody's legs.

J Mind you, you'd have to say you were an offcomer if you came from the next village. I mean, I only came from Barrow, I was an offcomer, and you were an offcomer for 20 odd years (laughs).

D Three generations.

B The fact that I was born here, I've lived here all my life and know about half a dozen people by name. I know everybody, but I know the names of about six people. She knows all of 'em! She knows all their bloody names and everything. But I've always been bad wi' names. Haven't I, Georgina? (J laughs)

J It's the children, isn't it, that you learnt everybody.

[00:18:22]

**Were there particular family traditions that your family did different from other families?**

D No. Not as I know. It was a village community.

**Or did everyone kind of do things the same way?**

B We didn't do things differently, but I think we had the harshest discipline in our house.

D We had it harder, yeah (laughs).

B Our mother always used to say that, because we always… kids played out all hours, and when we were little, our bloody mother made us go to bed at 7 o'clock, which was ridiculous. But everybody'd be out playing, and then when she bellowed for us to come in, everybody else had to go home then, all the other families had to go home – kids were called in. But it was always us that started it. So I don't know about family traditions. And I do remember all of these houses originally on the main street have long strips of garden behind them like this one goes down to the bottom there, but the other side's just the same, and we were on the other side. Two gardens down from us is Dick Myerscough and Norman

Barrett, who were hawkers, but they bought all their stuff in, they didn't grow it, but they had an orchard up the back.

D They had their own greenhouses. They did grow lettuce and tomatoes.

B Not a lot of, compared with the size of ours even. But anyway, they had all this lot, and they had apple trees and things up the orchard. And one day I was pinching some apples and Dick Myerscough -

D Borrowing.

B Well… yeah… I was borrowing 'em but I wasn't gonna put 'em back. And Dick Myerscough caught me. So he gives me a clip under the ear and that was it, and I come home, onto 'road, round, I'm bawling my eyes out. More embarrassment from being caught than owt else. And our dad says, "What's the bloody matter with you?" You know. And I said [whimpering] "Dick Myerscough clipped me round the ear for pinching apples."

D Boot up the arse -

B So he gets hold of me, and he's holding with me one arm and booting me with the other, and I'm going back, up and down. And he says… every time he thumped me he said something, he says, "That's – not – for – pinching – apples – it's – for – getting – caught!" [all in uproar of laughter]

**Oh, that's good.**

B There was a difference. As soon as he let go, I was off like a rocket. Our Derek got caught for something similar once upon a time, and he just stood there. And as long as he stood there, our father was booting him up the backside. Every time he touched the ground, he booted him up again (laughs).

[Discussing tape player 00:21:03-00:22:01]

D Was it a bomber down at Bottom Banks that grandfather went out and got the crew back from down at [inaud] [00:22:10]?

B What it was was one of the training… there's a lot of World War II training airfields round here – there's one in the village, one on Walney, there's stuff round at Southport, and the Isle of Man, as well as Kirkbride on the way to Scotland. So there was a lot of training airfields round here and they did a lot of training. Well, one of them crashed in the Bay, and our grandfather rescued -

D Silloth – there was one there, an airfield.

B Well, Silloth airfield… yeah, I mean, there's loads of airfields for training. Yeah, there was a bomber crashed, but it wasn't a bomber on bombing duties, it was training. In fact there's quite a few crashed round here, but he only saved one of 'em.

J He brought a body back once, didn't he?

B He brought a body back many a time.

D Our father did (laughs).

B They used to regularly bring bodies back. When we were kids, we had a garage as well as the shrimp buildings and one thing and another. There was a garage, and we weren't allowed in there on certain occasions. That was when they had bodies in there that they'd fetched home.

[00:23:20]

**When they'd been out fishing?**

B Fishing, yeah.

J Mm, mm.

B In the good old days they used to get washed off the Irish ferries and things like that, either compus mentis or not, I don't know, but we used to get quite a lot of – we don't get 'em nowadays. The fish probably eat 'em.

D Our father brought home a monk. I can't remember where the hell it was from, but there used to be some ritual or other that they'd cleansed themselves in the flowing water of one of the bloody rivers, and the daft buggers did it when it was in spate.

[00:23:51]

**Where was this?**

D I don't remember where the hell it was, but I do remember him bringing this bloody monk back.

B I don't remember that one, but -

D As you say, they'd been out int' garage and got on with boiling t'shrimps.

B Aye.

D Before days of telephones or owt, so he thought "Right, no problem." We were too small to open garage doors, but we knew summat was going on, and there

was [inaud] [00:24:14] window up ‘side where you could go up ‘side o’ greenhouses, and mother was coming out for summat out o’ garage, so legs it up and into… looking through ‘window (laughs). Aye.

B They always used to put bodies in there.

[00:24:27]

**But was that from somewhere round here or… ?**

D Yeah, it would be. I think the last ‘un I remember was Albert picked up a woman that had either jumped or fallen off one o’ t’ Isle o’ Man ferries, if you remember that one.

[00:24:43]

**Oh dear. Right. So people used to fall off the ferries?**

D Well, they’d get pissed up and fall over, wouldn’t they? (all laugh uproariously)

B Nowadays you’re not allowed out on deck in bad weather or whatever, we go to ‘Isle o’ Man regularly, but sometimes there’s some bad weather. And obviously into ‘Irish sea… well, being a bay, very often stuff gets washed up into here. You get all sorts – driftwood and stuff – well, drift bodies as well. So we’ve had a few o’ them over the years.

D [inaud] [00:25:13] (laughs).

B 'Cause again - we keep saying about this paragon of virtue our granddad – half of the bloody village would run a mile when they see a body, but he used to pick ‘em up, put ‘em into ‘cart and bring ‘em home.

D Well, in the early days there used to be a bounty on ‘em didn’t there?

[00:25:26]

**Was there?**

D I believe so. I believe there was a bounty.

B I don’t know about a bounty, but I noticed… (walking away) keep talking! (J and D laugh).

D I think there was, so that’d be why he -

[00:25:38]

**Yeah, yeah.**

D What do you do when you find a body? First thing you do is you do is you check the pockets (all laugh).

B I remember that. That (showing a picture) is just a boat that broke its moorings somewhere ont’ Fylde coast, lands up int’ middle o’ ‘Bay.

D Ah.

B So there it was, all by itself, we went past it shrimping, comes back, and obviously it’s not somebody who’s gone aground, it’s an uninhabited boat. So we anchored the damn thing, and by the act of anchoring, coming home and reported it, we got salvage rights for that boat and then got money out of it (laughs).

[00:26:13]

**Wow.**

Aye.

**So what would you do? Who would you report a body to – the police?**

D The police, aye.

B The police or coast guard or whatever.

D There was a police station at Cark.

J We used to have police stations in those days (laughs).

B We used to have a police station on the square at one point, but the Cark policeman lived on the square – Cheetham, George Cheetham and er -

D Mike Cheetham's father?

B Well, Mike Cheetham and George were brothers.

D Mm-hm.

B I went to school wi' George.

D Yeah.

B And was it Mike who died when he was playing football?

D I can't remember.

B Anyway, never mind, but the dad was policeman, and that's local. Proper police in them days.

[Derek goes out]

[00:26:57]

**I was gonna ask but… anyway, nevermind.**

B Ask anyway, and I'll give you the truth while he's not here (laughs).

**About the bounty, who would pay?**

B Oh, I know nothing about that.

J I don't know whether Derek knows any more than that.

B I was never mercenary (laughs).

[00:27:26]

**Are there any other stories that come to mind?**

B Well, we've got about 70 years of 'em, but something has to trigger 'em, you see. But we've done all sorts over the years. I mean, how we survived is the miracle. What people can do these days and what we did do just don't bear

comparison. It's absolutely ridiculous. I mean, even at work… [Derek comes back in]. Never mind (laughs).

**You mean… ?**

J Health and safety.

**Because it was a harsh life?**

B Well… it was for some people, but I mean, you grew up in it. It wasn't harsh really. I mean, we had it good. If you'd been 50 years older, then they had it rough. I've always said we're the luckiest people in history.

D Yep.

B There was 'First World War… Just starting in this century... First World War, millions killed, followed that by the Great Depression, followed that by the Second World War, at the close of which I was born, and then it all went uphill after that, you see. It was really good. But it certainly peaked and it's going down again now. So we've had it really good.

J Every generation says that (laughs).

D By the time you're old, you're knackered (laughs).

J You won't be retiring anyway, will you? (laughs)

B The bottom line is, they were hungry till we were born. And then, partly because of the Second World War, the trade and one thing another was worldwide very quickly after that. When we were kids, moved into t'Sixties and you're getting jet aircraft and you're getting package holidays, and the world's

changed. So I wouldn't say it was harsh, it was the same for everybody else, but we had fun.

J Well, everything was still on rationing, wasn't it, when we were kids?

B Yes, things were rationed.

D If you're talking about your local coppers, I can remember one Sunday morning -

B Were we?

J Cheetham, you mentioned the name.

[00:29:27]

**We were before he went out of the room, yeah.**

D I can remember one Sunday morning, it probably still is the same but I don't know, we had horses loose on Rougham [?] [00:29:38] grazing, and Grandfather had walked down wi' quarter bail o' hay and whatever, and check 'em out, and Cheeter – we had a lurcher, Cheeter, he was a bloody good hunter - and Grandfather had walked down and walked back, and on this particular Sunday morning he walked back with eight rabbits over his shoulder. And I didn't mind skinning and gutting the bloody things if I'd had the fun of going out and catching 'em. But -

**[00:30:08] [End of Track 2]**

**Track 3**

**So I was gonna ask, you had a few er…**

B Run-ins with the law, yes.

**No, no no!** (all laugh)

B Those were all allegedly!

**You had other jobs, Derek, as well as fishing.**

D Yes… yes.

[00:00:14]

**Can you tell me a bit about that?**

D Well, my first job away from home was a factory farm at Cark – Vitagrass, they used to make feed for animals.

B Compressed grass pellets.

D They had a lot of acreage that they used to just keep mowing, and they had a factory unit there where the grass was dried, then pulverised with a hammer mill, and then they would sell some bags of loose powder. The other they would make into nuts for hen food or cattle food or whatever was required. That was my first job away from home.

[00:02:14]

**And what age were you?**

D I was 17 at that point, 18 – coming up to 18 – because I went from £5 a week from Father to £22 a week at the grass dryer. But it was only a summer job.

B Mm.

D And I left the grass dryer and went into Glaxo. Grass dryer it was five twelves and a six. It was six till six Monday to Friday. Saturday morning you just did 6 till 12, but you could do overtime if you wanted. So I used to make up as much as I could wi' that lot. And then I went to Glaxo and I dropped to 40 hours a week. Which is what we say isn't a bad thing [?] [00:01:45] (laughs). I was at Glaxo for 14 years, 14 and a half years. And most of the time I was… well, I always worked shift work, so it was most of the time part time fishing, part time with them. A lot of the time with my dad, part of the time on my own, depending on what was going on.

I left there and went offshore at Morecambe Bay gasfield, had 18 years out there.

[00:02:23]

**What age were you when you did that? Or what year was it?**

D I was 32 ish when I started out there. I did 18 years out there. And then I did another 10 years on the international working in various places. It was… yeah.

J Retired twice (laughs).

D Never ever retired. Just a change of career.

[00:02:45]

**What were you actually doing at Glaxo?**

D At Glaxo I was just a bog standard basic process operator, unlike His Nibs, who was one of the engineering managers. I was one of the ones that used to go and take the samples, climb up and down the silly [?] [00:03:02] bits and muck out places, do whatever was required.

B And make up the readings and the hourly logs.

D And put down the exact readings, as long as I didn't pour chocolate over the… (laughs) machinery that took the readings.

[00:03:21]

**What were you taking readings of?**

D In Glaxo there was obviously a lot of different jobs in there. They used a lot of different solvents for all the different parts of it. And when they were used, they used to come back into storage to be regenerated. And it was what they classed as solvent recovery. We'd take a stream that was badly contaminated with whatever and then put them through fractionation, distillation columns, ion exchange, caustic (ph) [00:03:51] exchange, whatever was...

B Caustic (ph) drying.

D Caustic drying, sorry. Caustic absorbed moisture out of dichloromethane or whatever chemicals you were doing. Acid ion exchange for taking whatever out of various bits and such. So yeah, some things you would add acid to to make the bases into a salt, so they'd separate out. Other things you would add caustic to so's that the acids would become a salt and you'd take them out. So yeah, it was alright. No major problems with it. Main reason I left there was me rather

than them, I got fed up and wanted a change. So nothing wrong with Glaxo, one of the best bloody things that happened to this area. But I got bored and moved on.

[00:04:48]

**So, sorry for being a bit stupid. What were they actually producing?**

D Drugs.

**Right.**

D Glaxo is…

J Pharmaceuticals.

B It's worth millions on the street (J and B laugh).

D One of the nice ones was… and I obviously missed my chance… you used to get obviously raw materials come in from all over the world, and they were marked up with different bloody languages and hieroglyphics and God knows what. And I do remember they used to get some square tins that were like biscuit tin size. But the bloody idiots had round holes with a pull-off lid. That was Unit 3. They used to empty these tins into the… we didn't know what they were, I wasn't a member of Unit 3, but they used to empty the tins into a tub and X amount would go into each batch with something else, and X something else. And I do remember being… the tea shack was in the bottom of Unit 3, and I walked in, and there's a bloke with a briefcase saying "Who's in charge of these? Who's looking after this lot?" And there was all these square tins. It was Unit 3 Supervisor, whoever it was. And I pointed him in the direction of it, and 15 minutes later, there's one of the guards stood on there, it was raw heroin in the

cans. Because we didn't know what it was, the guys didn't know, they didn't completely empty 'em because they weren't user-friendly to get completely empty. So it'd have been dead easy to get a couple of can full o' bloody heroin.

J What were they using that for then?

D It was an input into one of 'em, I don't know what it was for, Janet. You might know?

B I know nowt about Unit 3.

D It was all marked up with Chinese hieroglyphics. It had come from China had this stuff. And the next thing there was one of the security guards was stood at the empty tins, and I went off on my few days off, and next thing was there was a complete compound built – security compound - with locks and all sorts to keep the empty… Well, Number 1, there was a secure area in a warehouse for the full stuff coming in, and then there was a secure area for the empty tins. And they made a lot better job of emptying the tins after that. They would probably have just gone to landfill. But yeah, that was…

[00:07:13]

**Did you work at Glaxo as well?**

D No, he was employed (B laughs). He never worked (laughs).

B I just went there for the lark.

[00:07:24]

**So you were never a full time fisherman then? You always had a… ?**

D 14 to 18 I was full time fishing. After that, no. It's allus been part time. Sometimes more than others. But yeah. I've always enjoyed it, and I just keep playing at it, so…

B Hmm.

[00:07:47]

**Do you think you would've fished full time if you could have?**

D (deep breath) Yes, but not on the…

B Wage scale (laughs).

D Yeah, let's put it that way.

J You wouldn't have the lifestyle you have now (laughs).

D It gave me a good grounding in life, that you find out that if you work bloody hard you get summat at the end of it – providing you work sensible as well. Some people work bloody hard and end up with nothing at the end of it. But there's nothing wrong with working hard, as long as you're sensible.

[00:08:25]

**How do you mean? Can you give any examples?**

D Yeah, I can. One of the lads that I used to work with offshore actually bought a car on his bloody credit card. Now, if you're paying 20% interest on a credit card,

what the hell are you buying a car for? That car has immediately cost you 20% more than if you'd waited 6 weeks.

J At least.

D Yeah. So yeah, you don't buy it unless you can afford it, is a bottom line -

B Yeah. I don't know about credit cards per se, but that was again one of our dad's sayings – "If you've got the money in your pocket you can think about buying it. If you haven't got the money, forget it."

D That's it.

B 'Cause when we were younger, it was the birth of the credit boom, you know, get it on the 'never never'.

D Yeah.

B But we were never never allowed to think about that! (laughs)

D Well, it's easy to do the maths and say "sod it" (laughs).

[00:09:27]

**So if we could just talk a bit about your life now…**

B Ooh, it's rough, it's rough (laughs). He's just come back from the Bahamas, we've just come back from the Isle of Man. A week today we go back to the Isle of Man. And we come back from that and go to Spain.

J We draw the short straw, our daughter lives on the Isle of Man. His son lives in the Bahamas (laughs).

[00:09:52]

**So there's a lot of travel by the sounds of it?**

B Oh, it's murder! (laughs)

D Yeah. The bugs that you meet (laughs).

J We have a job fitting it all in, don't we?

B Aye.

D Yeah.

[00:10:04]

**What do you enjoy doing?**

B Staying in bed. But I don't get away with it.

J And they race these silly motorbikes, the pair of them.

B When we were younger, we used to play with motorbikes. When we got…

D – middle aged! (laughs)

B When I grew up a little bit, I give up with motorbikes. i.e. as I've already mentioned before, it was the era of ice blue jeans and 12 inch bottoms. And

every time you'd go out on a motorbike, you got wet, which mean you couldn't get the pants off, so you were stuck in your jeans. Which then shrunk, which made it worse.

D Says somebody who sat in a bath full o' cold water to get 'em shrunk on in his younger days.

B You had to put socks on to be able to pull the pants off round your ankles, they were so tight. So I gave up motorbikes when I got old enough to drive my dad's car.

[00:10:55]

**What age was that then?**

B Well, 17.

**Yeah.**

B I've been driving his car round the locality since I was in my early teens. Because I could drive. And so you do.

D It was my job to go and deliver and collect shrimps when I was about 13. And the copper used to be parked in Flookburgh station lay-by bit. And he knew what time you were going for shrimps and suchlike. If he saw you, he'd look away, because he knew that you were working, rather than out playing (laughs).

B But that's exactly the point. I used to go round, buckets o' shrimps, taking 'em out for the pickers and then going back and collecting the waste husks and the shrimps. And that's exactly what he's talking about. I were doing that at 12 year old, driving round…. So once we were old enough, we went to Bristol and back in

one day for a ride out. We went down to Bristol, a little place on the coast, Portishead, and then came back. And just to make it interesting, we came back through Wales. This was long before the days of motorways. So driving was something that we just did (laughs).

D Didn't think about it, it was just you'd been brought up with it.

B So I went off motorbikes. He on the other hand was using one to go to work on. And as has been mentioned once or twice, when it comes to mechanical things, animals don't come into it. And his bike was flapping and banging and making all sorts of horrible noises one day. And I'd never been near a motorbike for a year or two. And I thought "I'd better give him some help" because it was too nice a bike to have him messing with. And what it was, it was a twin cylinder with twin contact breakers, one for each side. And one of the contact breakers had broken. So sends him off to Eddie Crooks's at Barrow to get some new points, brings 'em home, fixes 'em, times it, and I thought, "I'd better take it out for a little test ride just to make sure it's alright before he gets on it and breaks it again." And in the village, you go down to the square – you won't have had time to see this but we had a square in the middle of the village… This is one road coming off it. And the one that's diagonally across goes straight down the moor, and it's what we call the Mile Road. Because it's a mile long and it's dead straight.

D It's not flat, but it's straight (laughs).

B Well, it is flat, but it's undulating with bumps. But it's flat, straight and a mile long. So it's called Mile Road. Which is quite useful for testing things – or used to be in the good old days – for testing things. So I go "blurgh blurgh blurgh" down the road and through the square and onto Mile Road, and opens the thing up (screeches like a motorbike). And as the revs went up, so it went faster and faster and faster, and I'm changing gears, and I get to the bottom of the Mile Road, and I think "This thing's pretty bloody quick." And I turned it round. And this

was in the days when you didn't have to wear crash helmets. And although as a rule I wore a crash helmet, because this was only a little test ride, I hadn't put one on, I turned round at the bottom and I'd red lined this thing through all the gears – six speeds, road bike. And it was capable… well, it was a Suzuki T20 Super Six. A Super Six was the six speed gearbox, it was the first ever road bike with six speeds. And it was capable of just about 100 mile an hour. And I'm coming up there, absolutely flat out, all the way up this Mile Road, until the wind got under one of my eyelids and it starts flapping like mad, I couldn't see a thing. I had to put my head down. And you've got a ditch either side of the road. So I'm coming hurtling up there and absolutely flat out on this thing – clipped out cappy racer thing with a little grey [00:14:49] on and one thing and another. Comes back up onto the square, knocks off, comes up the village, gets off the bike, I'm shaking. I says "I think we should race this thing". (B and D laugh) So it wasn't very long after that where he rode it up to Silloth to a race meeting, we changed the tires, put race tires on it, and I rode it. And that's how we started racing. And that went on over the years till I gave up racing in 1981, and never thought about racing again till about 2006. Our eldest daughter's mad keen on motorbikes, she's visually impaired, can't get a road licence. So we would take her to one or two races just for the fun of it. So we went to a couple of club races. We went to a couple of BSBs, and then we went to a couple of club races, because as I say, it's much better, you get in among the bikes. Instead of watching them from afar hurtling round making a lot of noise in the distance, you get right in among them. So we go to Aintree for a club meeting, and walked into the paddock and immediately bumped into a bloke who was from Poole in Dorset, who I knew from 1977 because he started Number 15 and I started Number 16. You start in pairs in the Manx Grand Prix on the Isle of Man, the TC Circuit. So I met him then, that was Dave Smith. And he stopped us and says, "Will Butler?" I says "yeah". And I'm bad with names, but it did come to me, didn't it? I said "Dave Smith?" He said "Yeah." And he was still racing after all that time. So a couple more visits, and we decided, well, maybe we'd better start again, so just playing at it. So that's what we spend our time doing – playing at motorbike racing.

J You were just gonna give up the second time when…

B A couple o' years ago I decided that's enough, when he said he'd have a go, so now I'm looking after two bikes.

[00:16:54]

**But you still go fishing as well, Derek?**

D Mm. Not as much as a should do, but when I was offshore -

B He should be there now!

D Yeah, well… round about I would guess about 30 years ago, I badly smashed my shoulder up when I was offshore. And it's been an on and off problem ever since. But 18 months ago or just over, a muscle snapped completely – so I found out afterwards. But basically I completely lost use of my arm, and got to various specialists who told me that "Well, you've done too much damage to it, we can't repair it." So I demanded a recount and went and saw somebody else, who agreed with the first guy, which didn't please me a lot, but yeah. I can still lift things, but I can't put my arm forward. So that's sort of restricted my fishing a lot. But I'm hoping to get back into it more now. Slowly the pain has receded and the other muscles have taken on a bit of the slack. When I first started fishing for my dad, I couldn't lift a bloody net, I had to pick up one end and put the one end on and then do the other end, so…

B That's 'cause he was too little.

D Probably, aye. I'll probably go back to my roots (laughs).

B You didn't have the option when I was a little lad of picking up one end or the other, because you're in four foot of water. It's alright for him, he was doing it on a tractor, where you bring it to the side.

D He was only picking one up. And as you well know, [inaud] [00:18:38] water only ways one seventh of what it does when you're picking it up properly (laughs).

B It weighs a lot when it's wet and you've lifted it out of the water.

D Yeah, but [inaud] deep in mussels [inaud] [00:18:48] I know.

[00:18:48]

**Do you think you need to be a particular sort of person to be a fisherman?**

B Deadly serious like us.

D Greedy.

**Oh you said, yeah.**

D If you're not greedy, you might as well not set off (laughs).

B You've got to be deadly serious. It's life and death (laughs).

D You've to be reasonably self-reliant. You've to be reasonably self-confident. And bloody daft, really. 'Cause it's damned hard work, it's cold, it's wet. And that's only in summer (laughs).

B And it has been said that tide and time waits for no man. And it's right. When the tractor stops and the tide's coming, you have to run (laughs).

D Yes. I've done that more than once.

[00:19:38]

**What makes you keep doing it, or want to do it?**

D Greed. (J laughs)

B Greed, yes. I was gonna say lack of arse pocket but… (laughs) Yeah. No, I enjoy doing it. It's a contest, isn't it? It's competitive. Even if it's not against somebody else, it's against the elements.

J You need to get some fresh air, don't you, Derek?

D Try that on that bloody tractor! (laughs)

B I hadn't realised he was a poet (laughs).

D There was allus a competitive element. You know how well somebody else has done, can you beat it? Yeah. Plus of course over the years it's always [inaud] [00:20:23] beer money.

B Mm.

[00:20:26]

**It doesn't sound like you had much time to drink beer to be honest.**

B Oh, he finds time to drink beer.

D Not anymore.

B It doesn't take him long (laughs).

D Me and grandfather must have been closely related (laughs). I don't know what happened to our father (laughs).

[00:20:41]

**Yeah. So your father didn't drink at all?**

D Every Christmas, two pints of lager.

B He didn't go to the pub. He didn't go to the pub regularly.

**He wasn't a sociable man?**

B He was very sociable, yeah, very sociable, but not a social drinker.

J He tended to go out for bar meals.

B If I was being black and white, I think he didn't go out because… I don't go out by myself. I – we go out together. And I think my dad was the same. And my mother wouldn't go to the pub.

**Right.**

B The only reason she would ever go to a pub was later, if there was a meal involved.

J They used to do that quite a lot, didn't they? Go out for bar meals.

B But that was later.

J He'd have a drink then, wouldn't he?

[00:21:23]

**That was when he was retired?**

B Well, no. He never retired. Unfortunately he retired and died two months later. He had cancer. So he didn't get his just desserts.

D It was less than that. He didn't get his first week, did he?

B He…

D He didn't get his first pension payment. Never got it.

J It was his birthday in the June and he died in the July.

B Yeah. He was 65, 23rd June, and died… I can't remember the exact day, but early July, at 65. So that was his biggest regret in life, was being self-employed – and he sounded on about this at some length – he was self-employed and he'd paid into various pension things and savings and things for his old age, and he put all this money into a private pension, and he wasn't going to get it. And that really upset him. And I can understand where he's coming from.

D Yeah. Yeah.

[00:22:25]

**Was that hard for your mum as well?**

B Yeah, it's never easy these things. But she wasn't short of money then.

J I think she did get something out of his pension, didn't she? I think she got half or something for quite a long time.

B I don't know, I don't know. But she's comfortable anyway.

J She was comfortable financially, wasn't she?

[00:22:48]

**Did she live quite a long time after your dad?**

B She died this time last year (slight laugh).

**So yeah.**

B 90 something. Yes, he was 65, she was 90 something. But it's not always fair is it, life?

D Mm.

[00:23:03]

**When you look back on your life and achievements, what do you see and feel?**

D Old (laughs).

**Pleased?**

D Yeah. Quite happy.

B If I had my time all again, I'd make all the same mistakes, just make 'em a lot sooner.

D I'm quite a happy teddy bear. I've done lots of things wrong [?] [00:23:24] and so far survived through 'em.

J You've done very well out of life.

B We're the luckiest generation there's ever been, and it's as simple as that.

J We had lots of opportunities. We had educational opportunities. We had opportunities to buy our own houses.

B We were lucky. We worked very hard for our luck, but it paid back. A lot of other people work hard and don't get the luck.

D That's about it, yeah.

B There's a lot of other people don't work hard and don't get the benefits either. And some of 'em get the benefits anyway.

J You worked for a good company that gave you a good pension, retired early, and it's been brilliant, hasn't it?

B Worked for Glaxo. Glaxo was brilliant. And I worked in Glaxo when it was on the up and up till right when it peaked and started to go over at Ulverston. And couldn't have asked for a better place to work.

[00:24:13]

**Do you have any hopes for the future for fishing?**

B Yeah, I was hoping to get killed by a jealous husband when he caught me in bed with his wife in about 2085 (J laughs). Any hopes for the future?

J I've not heard that one before, Bill. You've kept that one close to your chest.

D Has he never told you that one? Blimming heck.

J (laughing) No.

[00:24:36]

**What's the future of fishing in this area, do you think?**

B Grim. Grim.

D Well, every generation says it's the last. Jack Manning reckoned his son was never gonna make a living. And I think his grandson's now making a living at it. So I think over the centuries, as we said earlier, there's full time fishermen, but they've always done farming, market gardening, whatever. You've got young Tony down there… I say 'young Tony', he's in his bloody 30s, he's a full time fisherman, but he's also a qualified joiner. So when there's not much to do in the fishing, he goes back to his joinery trade. And there's other lads that… There's

very few… there's only I think Michael Wilson that you could class as a full time full time fisherman. And even he's got green crop for t' markets and suchlike.

B As his father and grandfather before him had.

D Exactly.

J Perhaps the difference is that people now expect a better lifestyle, don't they? I mean, I think you could probably sustain a lifestyle out of fishing like they used to.

D Yep.

J But everybody wants more these days, don't they?

D Yeah.

J They're not just content with what they had in those days.

D I'm quite happy that I moved onwards and upwards in various other directions, but I've always come back to fishing 'cause I enjoy it. But it's not a lucrative… it can be. For very short periods, you get… it's always a boom and bust is fishing. You're either neck deep in it or there's bugger all. And the in between times, you have to be good at it, to be able to -

B And he's only talking about the water there – high tide and low tide! (chuckles)

D You have to be good at it to find what few there are in various areas. And the bloody authorities are regulating it down, so's that even if you do know where there is a few, you can't go and get 'em because of rules and regulations. And half the bloody rules and regulations are made up to assist the boiling plants.

Because they want them in bulk all of a sudden in a hurry, and then shut the boiling plant down. They don't want a constant small trickle. As a fisherman, I'd much rather keep going as a constant income, rather than "wallop", get a lot, and that's it, find another job, you know.

[00:27:13]

**What are the boiling plants? Sorry to be ignorant.**

B Cockles tend to go onto two markets. They either go onto the live market onto the continent, or they go to what we'd class as the boiling plants. Parsons… You must have seen jars of cockles in…

D … pubs.

B They come from big boiling bottling plants, and they handle tons at a time. When we used to boil 'em, six stone baskets. It's bloody hard work holding out a six stone basket at arm's length, and lifting it out the boiling water and trying to not scald yourself.

**So you don't boil them now?**

D (pause) Legally…

B No, I don't boil them anymore. But if you want some other chap [?] [00:28:02] (laughs). As I say, rules and regulations.

J They come in these great big Spanish pantechnicon things don't they when they open the cockle beds.

D Well, that's it. They either go to t'live market in Spain, or they go same…

B You saw that picture of a cart with a few bags of… or a trailer, with a few bags of cockles on. Well, now…

D It's like that.

B This road outside here, that's an exceptionally good tide for one or two, maybe three people in the day. But now, they go literally by the dozen if not the hundred, on quad bikes. And they have people on big tractors and trailers, ferrying stuff back and forth in the same tide. Well, the workers are digging 'em, or catchin' 'em. And then they offload 'em straight onto HGVs with Spanish numberplates. And within 12 hours they're out of the country, within another 12 hours they're probably being distributed in Spain.

J Mm.

D Within 24 hours from leaving here they'll be on the markets – on the fish markets – or in the restaurants in Spain.

B Spain's a big market for 'em, you get a lot of cockles in paella. (J laughs)

D As daft as it sounds, up until relatively recently, the Dutch were the biggest buyers and sellers of shellfish. And they do it with boats, dredgers. And erm… yeah. In those days, it was a relatively local market. They'd load trains up and they'd go down the Lancashire mill towns.

B That's right, yeah. It was sustainable. That's the difference. We're into sustainable everything these days except er…

J Fishing.

B Fisherman. The fish they'll sustain 'em, because they'll blitz 'em and then leave 'em for 8 years and blitz 'em again. Whereas to be a fisherman, you need it to be steady.

D I can give you an example of the bloody lunacy of when they shut the beds 8 years ago, Young Shakey (ph) was coming up. He'd been working on his own with a Nuffield, and he had about six bags on the back. And the fishery guy stopped him and said, "You've got quite a lot of small in there. Take 'em back and riddle 'em." Local fisherman working on his own. Meanwhile, coming along, there's a tractor with 20 ton on. And Shakey says, "Are you gonna make him go back and riddle them?" "Don't be silly, he can't riddle all them on his own." And they were allowed through. Now, how bloody stupid is that?

J Mm.

D I can give you another example, an absolutely brilliant one. I went to a meeting, it was just before all these Chinese got drowned, I went to a meeting, and they were literally living rough on Aldingham Shore. And there was all hell breaking loose. So the police and the fisheries were told be seen to do something about it. And the fisheries were told, "You must be seen to be policing these jobs. But don't stop anybody that you think is an illegal immigrant, because if you do, we've got to house them, clothe them, feed them, and give them spending money." And there was one and a half thousand of these buggers at the time. So the fisheries have got to be seen to be doing something, so who are the only ones that they can do? The people they recognise. The people that make a bloody living at it were the only ones that were getting hammered. And it was lunacy! And one of the top men in the Sea Fisheries bloody thing after one of the meetings, we'd had one hell of a ding-dong, and after the meeting he came and he said "Look." He says, "I know you know we've been told not to stop them." He said, "But if anybody asks me in public, I'll deny it, because we haven't got to be seen to be doing that. We've got to just do our job." I mean, what

bloody good is that to us as locals? Our job was then shut down for 8 years. 8 years!

[00:32:29]

**Because they'd been over - ?**

D Because they'd bloody wiped the lot out! They were taking anything from that size to… well, whatever size there was.

J Mm.

D As I said, it's dead easy to stop that lot. All they have to do is stop that guy with 20 ton and say "Right, mate."

**Yeah.**

D "We're not gonna fine you. We're not gonna do anything to you. You go off and walk, piss off, we're confiscating your tractor and your catch." The fisheries could then take their pick – whether they took the lot and spread it out, or they could grade them, keep the good ones, flog them, that's income for the Sea Fisheries, sell the bloody tractor and trailer because the tractors and trailers them lot… Ours cost anything from sort of £800 to a couple of grand. The tractors and trailers they had were 80 to 100,000 quid's worth. Confiscate one of them, they'd be back next day, but if you confiscate two, they'll never bloody come back again. That's what they should be doing. It's what they do in Scotland.

B I hope you're taking notes here.

[00:33:28]

**Well, it's all going on the tape!**

D The bastards should be hung! (all laugh uproariously)

B You could get a second career in Sea Fisheries. You know. 'I have a vision for the future.'

D Yes.

B Rivers of blood!

D You don't need to touch the person. You don't need to prosecute the person. All you have to do is take away the tools of the trade.

J Don't ask him any questions about cockling, will you?

[00:33:56]

**No, it's interesting.**

B He's a broken record! (laughter continues)

[00:33:55]

**So are you saying that they haven't… ? Well, I don't suppose you would know… that it's not been the same in other parts of the country then?**

D It has been the same.

J Yeah, yeah.

[00:34:08]

**Oh right, OK.**

D Don't get me wrong. I'm in some respects as bad as them guys, because I go up and down on the what's-it…

B Fylde.

D Preston river.

B Ribble!

D Ribble. I've worked out ont' Ribble estuary, I've worked down in Conwy ont' cockle beds, I've worked in various areas. So in some respects I'm as bad as they are, but wherever I've gone, I've gone with a bloody riddle and I've left the little 'uns. Whereas -

B It's the scale of operation. It's just professional or traditional fishermen do it sustainably.

D Well, you need to, because you wanna do it again next year.

B The way it's managed, it's factory farmed and finished.

D The Sea Fisheries are working on boom and bust.

J They're having the same problem in the Isle of Man with the Queenies.

B Queenies, yeah.

J ‘Cause they come with dredgers and just dredge the whole of the bottom.

D They were trying to licence dredgers for the bloody cockles.

J Yeah.

D They have licenced dredgers for the mussels at -

J But it just wrecks the seabed.

D There’s another example for you. Historically, off South Americas, as they call it, the bottom scars out from Barrow… sea mussels, 3, 5, 7 years out of 10, each time the sea mussel get root, they get battered off by the winter storms. And they’re ‘a loss’, right, so they decide that they’ll sell these sea mussels down into the mussel fisheries in Conwy and round onto the east coast – East Anglia and round there. But boats come, dredge up bloody thousands of tons – and I mean thousands of tons – of the sea mussel, and away with ‘em. Oh right, everything’s great. But all those ones that got battered by the storms died and became feed stock for your shrimps.

J Right.

D There’s no bloody shrimps now. I wonder why!

J Right.

D Ian and Tony were out last week, just over 4 lb between ‘em on one day.

B Not a lot of shrimps (laughs).

D Not a lot of bloody shrimps.

[00:36:18]

**So what sort of… I mean, are we talking… you mentioned factory farming. Is it like the equivalent of a big factory farm? Are you talking about a big - ?**

B Well, no, these are organised – literally organised – gangs.

**Yeah.**

B I mean, they're called gangs, they're gangmasters.

D You get gangmasters, yeah.

B And what you've got is one bloke who's operating maybe 40 labourers.

**Yeah.**

B And they provide 'em with unlicenced quads.

D It doesn't need to be licenced.

B What?

D It's off-road so it doesn't need to be licenced.

B Well, when they're going up this hill here…

D Well, yeah.

B A few years ago they stopped ‘em all coming back here. They did something once – only once. And as they all came back from the sand, they stopped ‘em. And they had a low-loader (laughs). And any of ‘em that wasn’t licenced, they confiscated ‘em on the low-loader. I’d like to think they were crushed, but I’m sure they got ‘em back again.

D Mm.

B But they had a low-loader full of ‘em in no time. ‘Cause it used to be like Brands Hatch.

J They’d go past for an hour [?] [00:37:22], wouldn’t they?

B Yeah, you’d get a steady trail of ‘em howling over here, going to – 'cause shore’s only half a mile from us here. And it’s a dead end and you just go out onto the sand. And er…

D It’s not a dead end. It’s the start of the sand road (chuckles).

B You would get all these quads howling up, and er… what was it? There was one of ‘em came down one day, and he actually had bags of cockles on him. Most of ‘em were being put onto trailers and things, but this one had two bags ont’ front mudguards, and two bags ont’ back, and a bloke driving it, and another bloke walking in front of it holding him back coming down the hill!

D Sounds reasonable. How else would you do it? (laughs)

B Well, I don’t know, but if it really couldn’t hold it (ph) [00:38:09] it’d have gone over t’top of him anyway.

D So?

B But anyway.

[00:38:13]

**I don’t want to go on about it too much longer, but why do you think the regulations do favour the gangmasters over the traditional - ?**

D Because they’re the ones [inaud] [00:38:27].

B Because the people that make the rules don’t understand the industry.

D Yeah.

B It’s the same as… I’ll give you a separate example, something I get really upset about, 'cause it’s modern and I’m not modern, is that people in industry get promoted because they’re good with electronics and they can talk and make presentations and promise the earth.

D Not electronics, just good with bloody PowerPoint presentations.

B Presentations, yes. So they talk, and they talk a good race, and they get the job. And then you get… and I’ll give you a simple example that happened locally at Barrow, you get an outbreak of Legionella.

D Aye. Because they hadn’t a clue.

B And people died. And why did they die? Well, the lady, unfortunately a lady, who was in charge, was not an engineer, was not a chemist, was not a scientist in any way, shape or form, but she could do damn good presentations, and she was the boss. And as the boss, as ever, 'cause all bosses have to drive costs

down, we do away with this system of testing and doing this, that and the other on all sorts of things, but the one that caught us out is a closed circuit cooling system...

D Ventilation.

B … heating and ventilation system, where the coolers and things are on the roof of a car park. And so all of the fumes from these things is going over the car parks and dropping down – water vapour, mist. And Legionella grows in warm stagnant water, or enclosed systems. And these used to have, and they always have in Glaxo… they have routine and regular samples and tests, samples and tests. And they're dosed and whatever, so that there are no Legionella spores or things detectable. This lady says, "Well, I didn't know we needed to do that." Oh, so that's alright then. But we've got several people that died, and others that have got lifelong illnesses, 'cause the respiratory…

D The thing with Legionellas, you can drink it, it won't do you any harm. You can inject it, it won't do you any harm -

B Inhale it and you're buggered.

D Inhale it, it gets into your lungs and that's where it explodes.

B But going back from that… that's an example I'm making of people running industry who don't understand it. And what used to happen, when my grandfather was involved, it was people who actually did the job, and rose to the top. Not somebody who's got a university education and can read a book. And can wave their arms about, make presentations but haven't a clue about what happens underneath. And they talk sustainability, and they're talking through their backsides.

D They don’t know what the hell they’re talking about.

B But we’ve gone right round onto that again. You really ought to get us off it! Come on, Mrs Chairwoman! (laughs)

D What I’ve said to ‘em many times, the next time to open them cockle beds is when there is none. Let them all come, everybody from everywhere comes, spend a week getting nothing. Leave the beds open, there is nothing. They won’t come back. Because there’s nothing to get. Slowly the beds’ll recover, and slowly the locals’ll find patches and work them, if the beds are open. And it’s self-regulating. If suddenly there’s a bloody great influx of cockles and there’s loads of ‘em, it immediately becomes known because we’d be exporting a lot more. So that’d perk the bloody lugs up and it’d send a load o’ people here. But as long as there’s only 5, 10 ton a week going out of the village, that’s not enough to make it a boom-bust bloody scenario. But it’s enough to keep us going.

B The legislation and the regulation just doesn’t fit the need, it’s as simple as that.

J There’s no point in closing it once everything’s gone.

D Once it’s gone, it’s too bloody late.

B Don’t encourage him!

[00:42:29]

**I think we should probably try and wind up.** (All laugh uproariously)

B Don’t wind him up! Don’t wind him up!

**‘Cause I’m tired, I’m sure you're tired.**

D I’m bloody sick of it! (laughs)

[00:42:43]

**If we can finish on something positive, is there anything… ?**

B IS there anything positive?

D Jail the bastards!

[00:42:47]

**I mean any happy memories or stories that stand out from your time in Flookburgh. Or something special about Flookburgh that you’d like to… ?**

D One o’ t’ daft ‘uns that I did was… Brian Shaw again. Brian had three lads – Bryn (ph) [00:43:06], Jay and Dean – a few years younger than me but good strong lads. And it was a summer. They’d still be at school, so it’d be school summer holidays. And we were cockling down ont’ Klondyke side. And I was going, and it was red hot day after day. And I was just going in swimming trunks. End o’ tide, get whatever I needed, you know, it was a quarter that I needed for our father. Once I’d gorrem, I’d just load up, and then drive in till just about 300 yards deep, and just run off ‘end o’ tractor and dive straight into ‘water, and it was lovely and warm, it was like bloody soup.

J (chuckles) Yeah.

D And these lads had seen me do this for a day. Next day, they were there doing t'same thing. It went on for about 4 days ont' low tides. And Klondyke, it's just a bloody great big basin. But as the tides rise… on the low tides, it was just coming up, covering the sands gently. And the sands were obviously blazing hot from the sun, so the water was getting hotter and hotter and hotter. And it was just like a bloody bowl o' soup in there. As the tides rise, so it suddenly, at one particular point, it just flushed all the hot water out. And you've a bloody great big bold full of icy cold water. And I'd exactly the same thing. I drove down, bounced off the… "Oh, Jesus!" It was like going into a tub of ice water! I was back out, onto the tractor and driving out, shivering (J laughs). Brian was just driving in wi' t'lads. He says, "What's up?" I says, "Tides have risen, Brian!" He says, "Oh, aye" [inaud] and that was it (laughs). Bloody freez- the difference from one day to the next, they must've been 15 degrees difference in the bloody water. Yeah, it was just risen high enough… the further it comes in, the further it goes back, just flush the bloody lot out. Christ.

[00:45:12]

**Well, that seems like a lovely note – (all laugh uproariously) – to end on, because it's something unique about the area.**

B (snorts) Unique, hmm…

**So I'll finish on that. But thank you, thank you, all of you, including Jan as well.**

J I just provided the tea.

**Well, that was a very important part of it, I have to say.**

D The lubrication.

**It kept us going, didn't it?**

J Would you like another cup?

**[00:45:36] [End of Track 3]**