

Interviewee(s): Archie Johnstone (AJ)	Interviewer(s): Mark Mulhern (MM)
Date of Interview: 27 July 2018	Ref: EL6-1-1-3-T
REGION	East Lothian
COUNTY	Haddingtonshire
TOWN/VILLAGE	Cockenzie

TITLE	<i>Mark Mulhern interviews Archie Johnstone on his experience in the fishing industry.</i>
REGION	<i>Lothian</i>
SUBJECTS/KEYWORDS	<i>Fishing community, fishermen, family.</i>
COUNTY	<i>East Lothian</i>
TOWN	<i>Cockenzie and Port Seton</i>
DATE OF INTERVIEW	<i>27/07/18?</i>
INTERVIEWER	<i>Mark Mulhern</i>
YEAR RANGE	<i>2018</i>
SUMMARY	<i>Mark Mulhern interviews Archie Johnson for the second time. They discuss Archie's memories of working as a fisherman in the Forth, on his father's fishing boat. Archie talks about the crew, day to day life and food on board the boat. They also talk about fishing superstitions in the fishing community. Archie discusses the change in fishing from his past to modern fishing. They also mention how the boats have changed in design and style. Archie tells Mark about the process of selling the fish they caught, how much fish would go for and what sort of money they would make.</i>

**Archie Johnstone – AJ; Mark Mulhern – MM.**

**Keywords: Food on a Fishing Boat; Fishing Superstitions; Skipper's Tickets; Fishing Regulations; Colour Blindness; Lighthouses; The Crew; Changes in Fishing; Prawns.**

**Food on a Fishing Boat – 0h 00m 00s**

MM: Right, this is Mark Mulhern in Cockenzie with Archie Johnstone on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, 2018. Morning, Archie.

AJ: Morning.

MM: How're ye doing?

AJ: I'm doing fine, good.

MM: Good stuff, good stuff. I thought we'd just follow on from our last recording.

AJ: Aye, aye.

MM: I'll just jot down a few a few questions, if ye dinnae mind.

AJ: Right.

MM: Em, I was wondering what food ye ate while you were out at sea, when you were working. What was a typical meal, and when did you eat? What times of day?

AJ: Well, the food that we ate... When we were in the boats, one man was designated as a cook and he did the cooking. He ordered the groceries and the butcher's beef and that. So, he did the cooking. But when a first started, there was an old boy that was cook and he had been a cook on the trawlers in Granton.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, he was- when I joined the boat, he was coming up towards retiring. I think he was about sixty-three or something.

MM: Right.

AJ: And he was coming up... So, he was typical as a cook was then. We got fish once at least, at some time o the day. Nowadays, men dinnae eat much fish. We only had fish once a week, maybe twice a week.

MM: Oh right.

AJ: But we used to get fish, some kind o fish, everyday.

MM: Right.

AJ: And, eh... But, aye, when we first started we couldnae carry milk up wi this.

MM: Right.

AJ: Because milk would sour.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, it was all tinned milk and tinned milk was, it was put in the tea or if ye wanted anything, if it was puddings or that-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -ye'd mix it with water and ye'd cook it that way.

MM: Was it evaporated milk?

AJ: Evaporated milk, aye.

MM: Ok.

**0h 02m 00s**

AJ: Also, on the boat, we used to carry the wee tins o milk that were sweetened.

MM: Och, aye, condensed milk.

AJ: And wi that the tin was there and there was a whole [?] on either side of the tin-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -so ye just poured it in.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, you were getting milk and sugar at the same time.

Mm: Aye.

AJ: So that was the- basically, how you would get over the milk situation.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: The- well, when ye went to the stores, ye had a bag, mebbe half a stone o potatoes for a week and... Ye had aw your groceries. When a first started, ye didnae use cornflakes or anything like that.

MM: No.

AJ: You couldnae use that. Crisps, couldnae take crisps to the sea.

MM: No.

AJ: Whenever they got on the boat they turnt soggy.

MM: Cause of the moisture?

AJ: The moisture, aye. Nowadays, they could get away with it.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Since they made the new bags- plastic bags.

MM: Aye.

AJ: They keep alright now, ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, there is- nowadays there is... And then, of course, the boats have fridges in and microwaves and aw that kind o stuff.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: But when I started at the sea there was nothing like that.

MM: No.

AJ: You had the... In the fish room, you had- at the start o the trip on the Saturday morning, that was one o the jobs on Saturday morning.

MM: Right.

AJ: Ye filled this locker up with a tonne of ice.

MM: Right.

AJ: And when you ordered your beef from the butcher-

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: You ordered the beef from the butcher and it was just some o the butchers did it, the cooperative didnae do it.

MM: Right.

AJ: Because we used [Harkness?] or the other one would use [Andrew Forn?].

MM: Right.

AJ: The butcher then, he made up your order and then he took it doon to the boat on the Saturday afternoon.

MM: Right.

AJ: And then he would go doon to the fish room-

#### Food on the Boat – 0h 04m 00s

MM: Aye.

AJ: -because he'd put the ice in in the morning.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, it was semi-solidified. He lifted the boards off, the boards at the ice locker-

MM: Aye?

AJ: they were just shipped in-

MM: Aye?

AJ: -and he lifted them off and he dug a hole and he stuck the beef in there.

MM: In the ice?

AJ: In the ice.

MM: And what would it- would it be a joint of beef or would it be mince, or-?

AJ: Aye, mince... Well, ye only got, like, ye only got mince once a week.

MM: Right.

AJ: And ye would get chops once a week.

MM: Right.

AJ: And there was a roast once a week. And what else would we get?

MM: Sausages?

AJ: Aye, we got sausages. Breakfast- breakfast in the morning, we always tried to get a good breakfast in the morning cause it's the start to our day.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, at breakfast ye got bacon, egg – wasnae *eggs*, one egg-

MM: Right.

AJ: Bacon, egg, black pudding...

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: Eh, sometimes beans but no very often.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: But that was basically... So, he cooked it and then put it in the oven and as ye went doon, because once you were working, because there was some men working and there was some taking their meal.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: So that's how the...

MM: And would ye have bread with that, or-?

AJ: Ye had bread wi that, aye.

MM: You would have bread?

AJ: Ye had bread wi that.

MM: And what time of day would you be having your breakfast, then?

AJ: The breakfast could be anything between five in the morning and... And, aye, five and eight in the morning.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken, if ye started earlier in the morning.

MM: Aye.

AJ: But likes o the summertime, the first thing in the morning, you would start fishing whenever it turned daylight.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, it could be three or four or five o'clock in the morning. What we did was, ye got your- ye got your- ye just took a cuppa tea and ye made yersel a sandwich.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: Or a biscuit or whatever.

MM: Aye.

**0h 06m 00s**

AJ: And that was your start o the morning.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And then after two hauls, it used to take about an hour and a half to take a haul.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ye ken, to make the [?] of a haul.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, the second after towing the third haul, the cook was away making the breakfast.

MM: Right.

AJ: And then yer running relays.

MM: Right.

AJ: There were- 'til there were two men left on deck and four men were sitting eating, and then they came up but... It was like aboot- for to get your breakfast, ye had to be up quick. Ye only got aboot twenty minutes.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And then ye were back up again.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, ye learnt to eat fast.

MM: I'm sure.

AJ: Ye ken?

MM: You'd be hungry anyway, though.

AJ: And ye were hungry, aye. So, that's how it went and then ye had lunch. Lunch was [at dinner?].

MM: Right.

AJ: Between twelve and two o'clock.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: And then ye had your tea at night, and most nights the tea at night was after ye were finished.

MM: Right.

AJ: And that's when ye had fish.

MM: Right.

AJ: It was fish- flatfish or you'd have a herring... Depending on what you were fishing at the time.

MM: The catch, aye.

AJ: Most times it was haddocks and cod and aw that kind o thing.

MM: Ah.

AJ: And one o the highlights was, you'd get a big cod, fillet a big cod for the whole crew.

MM: Right.

AJ: And, eh... The favourite sauce for the cod was mustard.

MM: Right.

AJ: And a still take it in mustard yet. But the mustard sauce was like how the chefs do it now, it was- near had half a pound o butter.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And then the mustard, and they mixed it aw up, and then the hot water went in and mixed it up. So, that was the cod. Aye, depending on what fish ye were fishing, they would...

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, ye got cod one day, ye got haddocks the next.

0h 08m 03s

MM: Right.

AJ: And if ye managed to get herring, sometimes the herring- the herring time o year, has like the now, herring was usual to pick up, they used to pick up the North Sea herring but now on... You'd maybe have the herring for your breakfast.

MM: Right.

AJ: And you'd eat your ham and egg at teatime.

MM: Fair enough, aye.

AJ: Ken? Just to...

MM: Aye, mix it up a wee bit, eh.

AJ: The only thing is, the cooks, once they got in a routine-

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: -it suited him and it suited the crew.

MM: Aye.

AJ: You knew what you were getting on a Monday morning and you knew...

MM: Oh right, it was the same?

AJ: [*laughter*] yeah. Ye knew what your meal was gonna be like, ken? It was more or less... Ye didnae ken what fish it was gonna be but ye...

MM: Ye knew it would be fish?

AJ: Yer bacon- yer breakfast in the morning and yer lunch, yer, eh... Ye knew what that was gonna be.

MM: What did you have for your lunch then, if ye had...?

AJ: Oh, aye, it was usually... In the wintertime, it was always soup.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And mebbe the boiling beef, like a lump o boiling beef.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: Boiling beef oot o the pot.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And there was aye plenty turnip in there.

MM: Right.

AJ: In the soup. So, the cook would take a couple o lumps o turnip and that would be put in a dish in the middle, that you took. So, you had tatties, turnip, and ye had beef – ye had boiling beef.

MM: Uhuh, uhuh, uhuh. Right, aye.

AJ: But you always had boiling beef once a week.

MM: Really?

AJ: I know, aye.

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: Like a lump o boiling beef.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And then sometimes ye had lamp chops, ye see.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: We didnae take pork chops.

MM: No?

AJ: No.

MM: Why- why's that?

AJ: Well... The crew was suspicious – curly tails were no supposed to be aboard the boat [*laughter*]. So, we didnae- we didnae carry pork chops, nah, nah.

#### Fishing Superstitions – 0h 10m 02s

MM: Ok [*laughter*].

AJ: I think pork sausages seemed to be awright because...

MM: If they were all mixed up.

AJ: They were skinned so it didnae maitter, like, ken [*laughter*]. For some reason pork sausages were awright then.

MM: Fair enough, aye, aye.

AJ: We never had pork chops.

MM: Nah.

AJ: Another point if we were stuck, it was whether the boat's cook thought we could have something for our tea.

MM: Aye.



AJ: If ye got a tin o red fish...

MM: Right.

AJ: Well, a tin o red fish was salmon.

MM: Oh, right.

AJ: Ye ken, John West-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -salmon was red fish. So, you never mentioned salmon on the boat.

MM: Oh, really?

AJ: Aye. Of course, course when they dished it up the skipper went [scatty?], I mean "*arghhhh!*". [laughter]... So, that was... I mean, I cannae compare it to now but there was a boat last week [?]. He was- they were things that ye ken about, ye ken.

MM: Aye.

AJ: One of the skippers here was, eh... He was aye scrutinising us.

MM: Right.

AJ: Always, ken. So, here, it was the summertime, ye see.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: So, it was his cousin that had the grocer's shop. So, he got his groceries from his cousin.

MM: Mmhm.

AJ: That was a custom. His old cook, who was his pal, he'd retired so he got a young guy in as cook, ken. So, a young guy, yeah... So, of course, the skipper's in the wheelhouse and then the galley's next door to it and the wheelhouse and the galley was joined.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, he'd just go through that door-

MM: Right.

AJ: -so, I hear [*crash crash* sound] and open it and he's 'Harry! What're we having for oor dinner the day?'

**0h 12m 01s**

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: 'Oh', he says, whatever kind of beef it was and tatties and, eh... And then, mushrooms. '*Mushrooms?*'

MM: Mushrooms?

AJ: Aye, 'no, it's no mushrooms John'... Ken the thing that grows on the cabbages? They look like cabbages?

MM: Oh, brussels sprouts?

AJ: 'Brussels sprouts, John', 'Brussels sprouts? How did you get brussels sprouts? How've you got brussels sprouts at this time o year?' 'Oh, from Tommy!' he says, 'they're frozen'. 'Frozen? If you think you're going to eat brussels sprouts, ken the price of brussels sprouts, and they're frozen [?]' He took the packet and he wouldnae let the fella boil them! [*laughter*]. 'I'll take them back to Tommy', he says, 'I'll take them back and I'll give them back,' he says. 'He should've kened better than to gie ye brussels sprouts!'

MM: Cause they're too dear?

AJ: Aye... [*laughter*]. What's Tommy gonna dae wi them when he took them back, like. Nah, he was adamant – 'these are going back to Tommy to show them that we never ete them'.

MM: No.

AJ: [*indecipherable laughter*]. Ah, ah...

MM: And for drinks, would they just be tea and coffee and the like, or-?

AJ: Yes, aye. Tea and coffee.

MM: You wouldn't have alcohol on board?

AJ: No.

MM: No.

AJ: No. Most boats would carry a bottle o whiskey-

MM: Right.

AJ: -or rum-

MM: Right.

AJ: -for, eh, in case of accidents or anything like that.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: That was the only time that the...

MM: Yeah.

AJ: The latter years, so when the boats started going to the Clyde, they could get their bond... Get their, eh, if you went far enough North...

**0h 14m 02s**

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: You had to be away two days to get to there and two days back, so-

MM: Right.

AJ: -you got the cheap- it was mostly for the fags, but we got drink and aw, but...

MM: Oh, right.

AJ: They found it wasnae working, that they were...

MM: Ah.

AJ: That there were too many things going wrong.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Because they had their- the... But then again, the big boats that went to Iceland...

MM: Mmhm?

AJ: They got a- they got a dram o whiskey the first thing in the morning.

MM: Right.

AJ: And then the last thing at night.

MM: Right.

AJ: But that is how that bond came in.

MM: Right.

AJ: It was- well, we were working in the wintertime, up near Iceland. So, it was- it was...

MM: Fairly cold.

AJ: It was, aye, it was, ken. But we were always well-fed. The men, ken, when the men... I would say a lot o the fishermen were better fed at sea, than what they were fed in the hoose.

MM: Well, I suppose you'd get regular meals.

AJ: Regular meals, aye.

MM: And that's quite a good mix there of meat and fish and vegetables.

AJ: Oh, aye. You had a good mixture. Ken, you'd get like carrots and turnips and...

MM: Aye.

AJ: And they wee turnips and aw that kind o stuff.

MM: Aye.

AJ: It was something to... But latter years, after- from now on you barely eat anything now except pizzas and...

MM: Aye, aye. Yeah.

AJ: They take nothing with them now, like, ken.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: But when I first started, that was all of it. And when I started, after the old boy, I was cook for a short time and it was just a wee stove, might have been about [*phew*] fifteen inches long...

MM: Right.

AJ: And fifteen inches broad. But ye had the... Ye had just a coal fire.

MM: Uhuh.

0h 16m 00s

AJ: So, you got the soup pot on the top o the fire, and then ye had another pot on whatever was- what you was gonna be needing, and of course, a lot of stuff went in the oven.

MM: Aye.

AJ: But first thing in the morning, the cook had to make the breakfast while they were shooting the [reel?] and that out.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, the- it was an art to fry eggs.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Because you... When you dropped the eggs in your frying pan, for some reason the white went one way and the yolk went the other [*laughter*]. And then when ye cracked it into the thing, when ye dropped the shell-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -and ye had two [pasty?] things to try to-

MM: Keep them together.

AJ: Keep the egg together, like. They even tried making roond rings and dropping them in, but they never... We had the boat rolling and it would tip-

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: -and then the egg was all mixed through and... So, you knew you were a cook when...

MM: When you could do that.

AJ: When you could fry six eggs wi the sunny side up.

MM: Right.

AJ: My- I'll tell you another story. I often tell this story aboot, eh, he was ma half-cousin.

MM: Right.

AJ: And a- a started in April o the year because that's when I left school, in April, after the Easter holidays. But Andrew had started just before me and he had started in December, so he had been cook, ye ken?

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And we were walking up Dunbar Street – I can still remember it – speaking to each other, and you can imagine twa fifteen year old laddies speaking, ken, aboot the fishing and he had a wee [start?]. 'Archie! What dae we dae if ye burst an egg?' Pffft, 'I dinnae ken', I says, 'just fry it, just try it out and fry it'. He says, 'but what do we do?' I says, 'well', I says, 'just cairry on and dae the next yin'. He says, 'nah, nah, you're all wrong'. A says, 'What for? What're you on about?' He says 'well, a says, if I've burst the first yin, I've burst them all'. A says 'And then what's that for?' He says, 'well, I've got yin, if I've burst all the eggs, that's left for me'. Because the cook always went last.

MM: Right.

**0h 18m 40s**

AJ: All the crew went before the cook could get the... Ken? He says, if they're bursting, they're all getting burst yins [*laughter*].

MM: Good.

AJ: I never though o that [...].

MM: Oh dear. Aye, you were mentioning where the galley was there, which brings me to a question I've been thinking about, cause I don't- I've never been on a boat like this. Could you describe the typical- the layout of a typical fishing boat? Like where things were? Where- aye. If there is such a thing as a typical boat.

AJ: Aye, oh aye, there is a typical... Well, actually, that model there is a typical fishing boat.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: You'll see the wheelhouse there, ken?

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: And then the bit that's green- that's yellow-

MM: Aye.

AJ: That's- the white bit is the wheelhouse.

MM: Right.

AJ: And the bit behind, that's the galley.

MM: Right. So, the wheelhouse is where the skipper is?

AJ: It's where the skipper is.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And the wheelhouse is where the skipper is. Now, the galley used to be about six feet long.

MM: Right.

AJ: And the breadth of it could vary on the size of the boat.

MM: Right.

AJ: Because to put a wheelhouse and a galley on a boat, and depending on the size that the boat was- see, a lot of these boats was only, eh, well, oor boat- the boat that my father got built in 1957...

**0h 20m 10s**

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: She was only sixteen and a half feet.

MM: Wide?

AJ: Broad.

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: Ye see? So, ye needed working area both sides.

MM: Ah, ok.

AJ: Of the wheelhouse and the galley.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, the wheelhouse and the galley was always joined. Aye, they were all into one. And ye needed three feet on yin side of it and three feet at the other side.

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: So, that was twelve feet, so you're only left with four, to five, six, feet in the galley.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: Depending on what size the boat was.

MM: Yes.

AJ: The newer boats are wider but, obviously, Andrew's galley the now, is about seventeen or eighteen feet.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, it was still just like the same two or three feet on each side.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, the galley could afford to be that wee bit wider. And it was- aye, the skipper always knew what was going on in the galley.

MM: Cause he was right next door?

AJ: He was next door, aye.

MM: Right.

AJ: So... And the galley was the same, the... See, when I went, there wasnae a galley on the boat.

MM: Right.

AJ: You cooked- you cooked down the stair where you slept.

MM: Right.

AJ: Down the stair on the boat there was six beds.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And there was a table-

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: -and the table would be about... Oh, three feet wide-

MM: Right.

AJ: -at the back o the table, but the boat coming in-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -it was only about a foot wide at the front, cause your seats were all there guiding in.

MM: So, the crew's quarters were at the prow? At the...

AJ: Aye, the crew's quarters were at the prow. This one here, the crew's quarters is at the back.

**0h 22m 02s**

MM: Aye.

AJ: But the first one I went to was what you called a 'ring net skiff'.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, a ring net skiff was fishing for herring.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: They were designed for fishing for herring.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: So, they wanted the fish room in the middle of the boat.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, the men's- the crew's quarters were at the front and then there was the fish room and then there was the engine room.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: At the bottom.

MM: Was the fish room always next to the crew's quarters, or not necessarily?

AJ: Well, no now.

MM: No.

AJ: The modern boats- see, my father got a new boat built in 1957-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -we're forgetting about herring, we were only going for herring-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -so, the front o the boat was the fish room. At the back of the boat, was the crew's quarters.

MM: Right.

AJ: And then there was the engine.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: And then there was the fish room.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: And then a wee bit at the front just for keeping nets or ropes or all that kind o stuff in.

MM: Right, right, ok.

AJ: Ken, but that was just a short bit because the belt, before we got hydraulic winches on the boat, you had a big- it was- the shaft from the engine ran below the boards in the fish room and that went to a pulley wheel.

MM: Right.

AJ: Same as a pulley wheel, and it came up on a belt-

MM: Right.

AJ: -to the top, and that drove the winch.

MM: Right.

AJ: Ken? So that was how ye had that space at the front o the boat.

MM: Aye.

AJ: It was so's you could get into the-

MM: Yes.

AJ: -into the belt.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: For the- if ye broke a belt, or repairing a belt or something like that.

MM: Is it fair to say that- was space a premium on a boat?

AJ: Space was a premium.

MM: Aye.

AJ: The- if ever a man could design a boat that's big everywhere and the boat's no big, he'd make a fortune. Suppose, you get a boat they'll say 'aw, but that's no big enough'.

**0h 24m 18s**

MM: Aye.

AJ: You would think then they would say, 'oh, we want a big engine room'.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: But if ye had a big engine room, ye had to have a smaller fish room.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, the fish room was the size o... That's what you brought the catch home in.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, if ye got in the good fishing-



MM: Yeah.

AJ: -ye had to have enough boxes of... So, the size o the fish room was how many boxes- empty boxes you could take in it-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -plus how much ice you could carry.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, oor last boat... Aye, that yin-

MM: [?], yeah?

AJ: The other yin that ye- aye. The other yin was the *Starella*, that's the one I had wi my brother.

MM: Right.

AJ: She was seventy-feet.

MM: Right.

AJ: But they were... They were for, eh, taking more- more boxes, bigger fish rooms.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: Bigger fish rooms.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: That was... But ye needed...

MM: So, it's quite a difficult balance to get in-

AJ: Aye, aye.

MM: -between the power of the engine and...

AJ: Aye, because if you're engine- if you've too big a cabin-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -in the back-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -see, that didnae happen wi the first boat, ye see, cause the men's quarters were oot in the front and then there was the fish room.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: And then there was the engine room.

MM: Where there's more space?

AJ: Where there's more space.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And it was the engine room. But later, ye couldnae have too big a cabin because that meant that they put the engine further forward.

MM: Right.

AJ: And then if ye put the engine forward, ye were getting past the middle o the boat-

MM: So-

AJ: Where you were putting your fish doon.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, ye check first, ye've got something on the boat, something with a big cabin and a big engine room. And some o them were built bigger because some o the men wanted that.

**0h 26m 08s**

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: Whenever we got a lot o fish, the boat was away wi the heid, ken?

MM: Aye, away wi the heid?

AJ: Away wi the heid, aye, that's it. That's if you're away at the front o the boat.

MM: Yeah, dipping in.

AJ: So, that is how the... That was aye in the shout. Then the other thing was the [draft?]. Then, it was the depth of water that the boat would, like, take to float.

MM: Yeah. Would that depend on the harbours that ye wanted to use?

AJ: That depended on the harbours. If you were up north, Peterhead and Fraserburgh and Buckie-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -their harbours are deep.

MM: Right.

AJ: Like of anything doon here, doon the coast-

MM: They're shallow?

AJ: Aye, because the harbour drains right oot.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken?

MM: So, empty-

AJ: But most times it's empty, so there's nothing left.

MM: It's empty just now, aye.

AJ: It's empty- it empties right oot, ye see, so-

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, that's how the boats were... Eh, shallow drafted, because- so's you could get in quicker, ye could get oot quicker.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And aw this kind o stuff, ken.

MM: Aye.

AJ: That was the beauty of the deep harbours, the men could go oot at whatever time o day they wanted.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And they could come in whatever time o day. In the Forth, the men have to decide when they're going oot on the tide. So, the boats down there are fishing the now.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: Likes o last night, they went oot at four or five o'clock to the prawns, so they're on at four or five o'clock tomorrow morning.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: They did their twelve-hour stint and that was it.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: But when the tides are no suiting, that is when ye have problems.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Because if the tides are no suiting, ye cannae be oot when ye want to be oot. Ye know, ye have to work roond about where the tide is.

**0h 28m 00s**

MM: Does that work to your advantage? To some extent? So, if you're based in a shallow harbour like this, the big- the guys with the huge, big boats, they couldn't use your harbour.

AJ: No, no.

MM: So, they cannae come down.

AJ: No, no.

MM: So, if it keeps it- for you-

AJ: Aye, aye, it keeps it full, but the Forth has a restriction on fifty-five feet overall length.

MM: Oh, does it, right?

AJ: Aye.

MM: Right.

AJ: Because that goes back from years and years ago. It used to be you couldnae fish for fish- white fish, if the boat was any more than fifty feet long.

MM: Right.

AJ: And then when the boats, that were the ring net boats, when they needed to go to the trawl for prawns-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -they got the thing extended to fifty-five feet.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, that's how the big boats cannae get inside the May island.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: They cannae get inside the May island because it's fifty-five feet.

MM: Right.

AJ: But the thing is now, they're building boats, saying they're fifty-five feet but they're nearer sixty-five feet.

MM: Really?

AJ: But they're designing... They're changing the rule book because they're taking the line between the rudder post and they're straightening it doon a bit. But it was- in the Forth it's still the overall length-

MM: The cut-off point.

AJ: -the back o the boat to the very front.

MM: Which is very different from the rudder post-

AJ: It's very different from that, because the new boats now, if ye get them, see the ticket is sixty feet?

MM: Right.

AJ: The likes of Tom's boat is fifty-nine feet.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Well, you could take that withoot a skipper's ticket.

MM: Right.

AJ: Cause sixty feet's the size.

MM: Sixty?

AJ: Sixty feet is the size now. It went up. It used to be twenty-five tonne.

**Skipper's Tickets/ Fishing Regulations – 0h 30m 00s**

MM: Right.

AJ: So... But as they started building boats bigger, twenty-five tonne boats werenae qualifying because they were well over twenty-five tonne because they multiply length by breadth by depth.

MM: Right.

AJ: To get the...

MM: Yeah.

AJ: The likes of Tom's boat is about sixty feet... But she'll maybe be about sixty tonne.

MM: Right.

AJ: And ye ken...

MM: Yeah, so it started...

AJ: That is how they- how they changed it a bit.

MM: Aye. You mentioned a skipper's ticket there?

AJ: Eh?

MM: You mentioned a skipper's ticket?

AJ: Aye.

MM: For the recording could you explain what that is?

AJ: Well, eh, it's a ticket of... To be in command of a fishing boat. That is the ticket. And you'd go to college and aw for it.

MM: Yeah, type of license, or-?

AJ: It's a type o license, it's a type o license.

MM: Sort of like a driving license?

AJ: Like a driving license. But now it takes them about eight weeks at the college to get it because there are so many different things coming in now.

MM: Right.

AJ: There's one, that's three or four days for getting radar tickets.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, as the radar's going round, if you pick up a boat and that boat could crash intae us...

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: And aw this kind of stuff...

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: The- I couldnae get a skipper's ticket because I was colour blind.

MM: Right. Ah, ok.

AJ: Ye ken?

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, that's why I was restricted to this boat-

MM: Right.

AJ: -here. Cause I had to keep it under the twenty-five tonne.

MM: Oh.

AJ: So, she was designed to be under twenty-five tonne.

MM: Right.

AJ: She was designed for twenty-five tonne.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: Twenty-six tonne, I wasnae allowed to take it because a was colour blind. So, a colour blind person cannae get a ticket.

MM: Right.

AJ: But there used to be a big, big lot o skippers that were colour blind.

#### **Colour Blindness – 0h 32m 02s**

MM: Aye.

AJ: And actually, they got roond it, they got roond it.

MM: You were a skipper though?

AJ: I was a skipper, aye.

MM: For many years, you were.

AJ: I was a skipper for, I dinnae ken how many years, certainly forty year.

MM: So, did you really need a skipper's ticket, do you think? For the bigger boats?

AJ: No, you didnae.

MM: No.

AJ: Cause you knew everything.

MM: Aye.

AJ: You knew it aw... I shouldnae say you knew everything...

MM: No, but you knew what you were doing.

AJ: Because there was things, like that they would get at the school, that we didnae get. It was the buoys wi colour, the colour of the buoys and that. We used to pick up the colour of the buoys-

MM: Right.

AJ: -as we went. We knew a red buoy was passing on your port side.

MM: Right.

AJ: A green buoy, ye must pass it on the [?]-

MM: Right.

AJ: -going wi the flood, ye ken?

MM: Right.

AJ: That's how the- all the buoy systems aw over the world is-

MM: Is the same?

AJ: -is the same thing.

MM: Is it?

AJ: Red to red, green to green – provided that the flood tide is going with ye.

MM: Right.

AJ: Ken, so that is... Aye, but there was... I would say the colour o the buoys and the colour o the lights was the only thing that stopped us, ken?

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: Cause nothing else stopped ye because you knew how to plot a chart, you knew how to run a boat, you knew how to catch fish, but on the coloured lights, if you were coming in to harbour wi a coloured light, if you couldnae pick up the colour you could make a mistake.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, that is how it came in.

MM: Right.

AJ: Tried to get a- it came about at that time, as I was wanting to build the boat-

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: -because that- we could... If you got- something to do with contact lenses...

MM: Right.

AJ: -could change the colours. This was in America.

MM: Oh, so- right, aye.

AJ: But it never really... It never came in, ye werenae allowed it on the fishing... On the nautical side.

**0h 34m 00s**

MM: No.

AJ: It was stopped. They just said 'no, yer no gonna be allowed that', ken? So, the likes of now, the most bits where I would have problems with the lights was when you were coming up frae North Shields to go to Eyemouth-

MM: Right.

AJ: -yer coming up towards Holy Island-

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: -coming inside. So, Holy Island, that's Holy Island there, the bottom bit.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: Now, ye came up and the [Farne?] light would be white and then the inside light would be red.

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: It was you couldn't let two reds go together.

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: Or else you would hit a rock.

MM: Right.

AJ: Ye ken?

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, coming up the Farnes, I would get one o the crew to come up that knew the colours.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And just watch that because you're watching the lights, 'that's alright, it's still white, it's still white'. And then when you got the other one right, you turned and went oot the other way.

MM: Right.

AJ: Cause that- you just still got a white on this side.

MM: Yeah, so you were safe.

AJ: So, what you were doing- what you were doing was ye were coming up, here's the Farnes all in there, see-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -so you were coming up and ye went- ye wanted to go through there and out.

MM: Right.

AJ: Cause this is all bad ground if it's bad weather, if it was a rough sea.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, if you went inside ye missed it.

MM: Cause it's sheltered.

AJ: It's sheltered, ye see.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, you held that up to there, right up there, until you got this light, white.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: And then you went oot, but you went oot from between that rock and the main island.



MM: Right. Aye.

AJ: So, that's how the boats used to...

MM: That's an interesting thing.

AJ: You get a lot o that on the west coast.

MM: Aye.

AJ: The sector lights, as they call them. Call them sector lights.

### Lighthouses – 0h 36m 00s

MM: See as a man who worked on the sea, how important are lighthouses, do ye think?

AJ: They were very important-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -when we started because there were no radars.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And we had no navigation.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: Ken, nae navigation... Instruments.

MM: Yes.

AJ: So, they were very important, but that's how they closed them aw doon.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Cause they didnae need them now.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Radar- radar's telling you where the land is.

MM: You can see through the mist and...

AJ: Aye, aye.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken? But, eh... But likes of when I started the sea, that was the first thing ye learnt is what the different islands in the Forth were.

MM: Right.

AJ: The flashing lights.

MM: Right.

AJ: Fidra was four flashes.

MM: Was it?

AJ: And, eh... May Island was one flash... One flash every ten seconds.

MM: Right.

AJ: The Bass Rock was six flashes.

MM: Right.

AJ: Every twenty or thirty...

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: Eh, seconds.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: St Abb's light was three flashes-

MM: Right.

AJ: -every twenty seconds, ken?

MM: So, you could tell by the flashes?

AJ: You just see one, two, three, that's the...

MM: St Abb's.

AJ: So, when ye seen a light, ye started coonting: one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, four hundred...

MM: Right.

AJ: ...five hundred, six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred...

MM: Right.

AJ: ...nine hundred, ten! Ah, ah! [*clicks fingers*] That's the May Island, see?

MM: Ahh, aye.

AJ: That's how you... But you knew aw the lights and [?] and yin and aw... So, you could- you knew where you were wi the light. It didn't make a lot o difference going oot here-

MM: Right.

AJ: -because when you were fishing in the North Sea-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -you could be fishing in the North Sea and then you were coming in to go to Eyemouth. Now, it could be that you're fishing over a three or four day stint, you would start off east of Eyemouth.

**0h 38m 03s**

MM: Right.

AJ: But if ye started fishing towards the south, ye'd never realise ye were shifted cause there were nae other... Nae other method o... ken, we didnae hear [?] or anything like that on the boat.

MM: No, no.

AJ: Ye started coming to shore, and then it used to sort of pick up, because if you were going to a- if you were looking for the St Abb's Head-

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: -but if we're going to Dunbar, we're looking for Barns Ness.

MM: Right.

AJ: Now, these two are only about ten, twelve mile apart.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, you could go to the wrong harbour if ye didnae ken the...

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: The thing we're talking about.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: But they were very important before we got aw the navigation aids.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: But that's why they're shutting them doon now.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: They're just leaving the ones, the ones that have got lights and they're on automatic, there're nae lighthoose keepers on them.

MM: Aye.

AJ: They're keeping them on because they're usually rocks, likes o the Bass Rock and aw that.

MM: Aye.

AJ: They're still flashing away.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Because they're no wanting somebody to hit it, ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: The May Island-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -and Barns Ness on the mainland, that's been done away with.

MM: Right.

AJ: It's no in use. St Abb's Head is still in use.

MM: Is it?

AJ: Because it's- coming up from the south, it's the main light for coming up into... Into the Forth.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And the same when you're going oot the other way, ye have the Carr Lightship. There used to be a lightship off, eh... Well, off St Andrews, between St Andrews and...

MM: Oh, ok. Right.

AJ: There was a lightship there but they took that away and just left a buoy.

MM: Right.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: But there used to be a lightship on that then.

**0h 40m 00s**

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: But if you were going north you went to the May Island, inside or ooutside the [?]. If you went- if you were on course, if you go up the north east, that kept you clear o the Carr Lightship, but your next yin was the Bell Rock.

MM: Right.

AJ: Bell Rock's still got a light cause that's rocks, ken?

MM: Yes, aye. Aye.

AJ: So, just in case- these are aw just in case your navigation-

MM: Fails or-?

AJ: -aid fails.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: You've still got the light and ken of course you've still got the book with all of the lights.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Yeah.

AJ: You'd have to be a big distance before there's one light exactly the same as the other.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Yeah. So, it's- for such a simple idea, lighthouses-

AJ: They are a simple idea, aye.

MM: -they're lifesavers, aren't they?

AJ: Oh, aye. Saved a lot of lives, a big lot of lives, like, ken.

MM: Aye, aye. Em, here we are... Aye, that's what I was wondering, how stable were your crews? Or did people come and go quite a lot, or did folk stay away for a long time?

AJ: First when that started, we had the same crew for... Oh, well, well my father's boat was my father, my brother Tom, me, my cousin John, my father's cousin...

MM: Right.

AJ: Jim Horn.

MM: Right.

AJ: And we had a fellow, Ross, as cook.

MM: Right.

AJ: Now, that crew was together for, aw, when he joined that would be, eh... That crew would be together for at least ten year.

MM: Gee whiz.

AJ: At least ten year.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken? And it wasnae until we got... Well, the crew didnae get broken up, really.

**The Crew – 0h 42m 02s**

MM: Aye.

AJ: Until... Until we bought *The Starella*?

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And we bought that, we bought *The Starella* in nineteen... 1968.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, ye would say that crew was together from... Oh, well, when I started in 1952.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: There was only one change. The cook went ashore and another cook came aboard.

MM: Gee whiz.

AJ: And the other five was the same men.

MM: For all that time?

AJ: For all that time.

MM: Ok.

AJ: Eh? And then when we bought *The Starella*...

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: My brother took *The Starella* and I was left with *The Morning Star* and the cook went wi him.

MM: Right.

AJ: And I got another cook.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, I still had the same crew and then we started to break up a bit when my cousin left, but that was only after a year. But after a year, it wasnae working oot that I was in the other boat and my brother was in this boat.

MM: Right.

AJ: Cause he was having problems with his crews.

MM: Oh, right, ok.

AJ: The problem was in 1968, that's when it was starting to become [?]. They were getting different crews.

MM: Right.

AJ: And it wasnae because it wasnae making money, it was just the crew said 'I dinnae want to dae this'.

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: Well, we were home and he was working further oot. He was working oot at the Norwegian coast and that.

MM: Right, right.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: So, he was away for five or six days at a time. So, the crew didnae want that, they wanted to be home. It was changing, the prawn fishing was getting better in the Forth.

MM: Right.

AJ: So, these men wanted to get a boat of their own-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -to fish the prawns.

MM: Aye.

AJ: See, so they became skippers of their own boats. So, he- my brother came across and said 'you'll need to come back aboard wi me'. So, I came back aboard and Jim Horn came wi me.

**Changes in Fishing – 0h 44m 04s**

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: And that was like four o us oot of five- oot of the six was together again.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Because my father had retired before that.

MM: Right, ok.

AJ: And the other one had... Aye, Jim Horn, Scott, me and Tom... Aye. So, that was back to before. But likes o now, ye never know when yer crew is. I guess one or two still have the same crew.

MM: Right.

AJ: But it's difficult to get crews now.

MM: Is it?

AJ: Aye. It's just- they're just... The young folk now don't want to go to the fishing.

MM: No.

AJ: No. Well, I don't know why, like, because they think it's unsociable hours, all this kind of stuff?

MM: Mm.

AJ: But the thing is with the fishing, that it was better before.

MM: Right.

AJ: Because we worked Monday to Friday.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: And we had every weekend at home.

MM: Yes.

AJ: Then just about the same time, 1965, '67, '68...

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: Well, that's when the boats started working weekends.

MM: Right.

AJ: They got bigger boats.

MM: Aye.

AJ: There were more expenses so-

MM: Aye.

AJ: If ye didnae make- if ye didnae make a good catch, well, firstly, ye worked the weekends.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And halfway through the next week and then you came home. I think that was one o the biggest problems with the men leaving.

MM: Really?

AJ: Cause well, I mean before you'd be able to say 'I'll be home every Friday morning'.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Especially the summertime, we'd be home every Friday morning by latest seven or eight o'clock.

MM: Yes, aye.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: But then we lost... We lost out on that.

MM: Right.

AJ: When we started working weekends-

MM: Right.

AJ: -that was another thing that... And then, the fishermen went through a sticky spell. It wasnae wanting to fish, it was the price o fish.

**0h 46m 02s**

MM: Aye.

AJ: Cause fish were so cheap, we werenae making the big wages like we were making a couple o years before. It wasnae the lack o fish-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -it just got to the bit where the fish was so cheap.

MM: So, when are we talking then? Is that the seventies, or-?

AJ: Nah, no, that was- that's into the nineties.

MM: Oh, really, aye?

AJ: The late eighties into the nineties.

MM: Ok, aye.

AJ: Then that's when the really bigger boats started getting stronger.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, aye, that was it. And then of course, at that time see all the men were plumbers or joiners or...

MM: Right.

AJ: They came as young men, passed, got their time oot, oh, if they were running around with friends that were fishermen, fishermen were getting three times the wages of what they were



getting. 'Oh, I'm going to the fishing', ye know. They tried to get on a boat. You took them to see if they were gonna be awright, usually they were alright, so they just stuck there, ye ken?

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: But then they started drifting back into their- when they started losing home every weekend-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: They started drifting back. Their wages ashore was getting that wee bitty better, so they...

MM: Right.

AJ: Or better after. Well, he heard that his wife was really wanting him home anyway.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken?

MM: And were most of the guys coming from round about, locally?

AJ: Oh, aye.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Aye. Sometimes, like at the latter- my last- well, when I went prawn fishing, say the last ten year, most o my crew was North Shields men.

MM: Oh, really? Right.

AJ: North Shields men whereas- we worked oot of Eyemouth and we did the same as Tom did, and went round to Mallaig in the summertime. Now, what I did was I had an old car-

**0h 48m 04s**

MM: Aye.

AJ: -so, I gave the Shields men the car, so they just left... It wasnae handy when they were waiting to get trains or missing trains or...

MM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ: But I had a man with a car, and he drove them up and doon.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, he picked them up and brought them up.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: And they were aw there, and I came from the car doon to Eyemouth and we sailed from Eyemouth and then we came back to Eyemouth and they went home in the car and I came doon, ken?

MM: Right, right. Aye.

AJ: That's how it got to that. It's gotten worse since.

MM: Different, aye. It's quite a lot of change then, since you started.

AJ: A big lot of change, big changes.

MM: Aye.

AJ: It was progress but I dinnae think the progress was... They're no nearly so happy now as what they were then.

MM: No.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Well, the fact that, say, that first crew that you worked on you were together for sixteen years or so.

AJ: Aye.

MM: I mean, that shows that it was quite stable and folk were-

AJ: That's right.

MM: -generally kind of happy, ye know.

AJ: Oh aye, you could... Ken? What used to happen if one man- if a good boat lost one o his crew.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: If a good skipper lost one o his crew.

MM: Aye.

AJ: There'd be two or three men, 'oh he's needing a crewman'.

MM: Aye.

AJ: 'I'll go and see if I can get a berth'. Now, if he got a berth now, he came back the next week on the Sunday night-

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: -cause the rule was then: sail on a Sunday night. You sailed on a Sunday night.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: If you tell me on the Sunday night that you're finishing up this week that's awright and no problem. That's what I'm saying, their rebates, they've got their rebates.

MM: Right.

AJ: But if you didn't tell us and you just walk away, ye didn't get rebates now.

**0h 50m 03s**

MM: Right.

AJ: The rebates was, eh, ye know, when you were, say, selling... The salesman had your custom.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: For selling your fish.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: At the end o the year, you got a percentage back.

MM: Oh, did ye? Right.

AJ: For being, eh... Selling wi that salesman.

MM: Oh, really?

AJ: Aye. It was just- it was just... It was a rebate that was being...

MM: Aye, and did that go to the skip and then the skip-

AJ: That came to the boat-

MM: To the boat, aye.

AJ: -and then the skipper- the skipper divided it oot among the crew-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -because we were share fishermen.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: We were aw share fishermen and so as share fishermen you got the share. You got the share o the catch and a share o the profits.

MM: But if ye just walked away, ye never got that?

AJ: You never got it. So, it was... It stopped them walking away.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And no telling ye.

MM: Well, aye.

AJ: Yeah.

MM: Aye, cause they'd lose money. Yeah.

AJ: But it was a wee bit hard – ye kent it was coming. Eh, you'd just be going oot the harbour on a Sunday night and somebody would come and knock at the wheelhouse door to come in and 'aw no, here we go, here we go'...

MM: [*laughter*] Aye.

AJ: 'Eh, Archie, I dinnae like to dae this but I'm leaving. I'm going on a bigger boat'. That was basically it. Most of it was they got a berth on a bigger boat.

MM: Aye, I suppose.

AJ: Whereas the bigger boats were making more money at that time.

MM: Yes, aye.

AJ: When you got to the bigger boat you were in, there was more chance of getting mair money.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Yeah.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, that's why we downsized into prawns.

MM: Yes.

AJ: To compete.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Cause there wasnae so much work but probably the wages would be nearly the same.

MM: Aye.

AJ: It's what they were at the white fish.

**Prawns – 0h 52m 00s**

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Cause when ye were at the white fish, ye needed six men aboard.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Cause when the fish came aboard ye had to gut them.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And select them.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And put them doon and ice them.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: When there's prawns, ye had to pick the prawns right enough-

MM: Sure.

AJ: -and put them doon. But four men was plenty.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: So, ye were cutting staff.

MM: Cause you weren't processing the prawns really, were you? You just...

AJ: Eh?

MM: You weren't processing them at all.

AJ: No, no, you just... You were picking them in grades but there was only two grades. They're big and small.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Ken?

MM: They're sold as a live catch, are they?

AJ: That's sold as a live catch.

MM: Aye.

AJ: But now, what they do now is that they have the small- they're live and then the small one's the tail.

MM: Right.

AJ: Tip the heads back over the side.

MM: Right.

AJ: And they keep the tails.

MM: Ah right, ok. Aye, aye.

AJ: The smallest ones is anything frae that size down.

MM: Right.

AJ: Are tails.

MM: Right.

AJ: And they're bigger than [the live?] because live is the premium thing.

MM: Of course.

AJ: That's what Tom was saying. Some of his lives was £140 a box.

MM: Gee whiz, really?

AJ: Aye, and his normal live was £100 a box.

MM: Right, gee whiz.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, it does pay if you could get a better class of prawn-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -it pays dividend, like.

MM: Aye, absolutely.

AJ: Because as he was saying, that when they go out the factory, they grade them.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: So, we just put them in the boxes.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: But when they take them in they tip them oot on this shelf, they clean and wash them, and then they spread them oot.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: And then she'll say, well, we've got ten kilo large prawns.

MM: Right.

AJ: And we've got fifteen kilo o the next size.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And then twenty kilo o the next size.

0h 54m 02s

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, they have their own price list what it is, and then she'll send oot what the...

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, that's what they cry 'pack out'.

MM: Pack out?

AJ: Pack out, aye.

MM: Right.

AJ: Whatever the processor... Selects them into-

MM: Yes, aye.

AJ: -is your pack out.

MM: Right.

AJ: Now, the boats [*laughter*] doon in Port Seton now, they dinnae work pack out.

MM: Do they not?

AJ: They have the... They have... They bring the boxes in.

MM: Right.

AJ: And they're selecting them into two sizes, just the same.

MM: Right.

AJ: And tails but mostly- most o them, they only have two men, so they dinnae tail.

MM: Right.

AJ: One or two o them do, but most o them dinnae tail.

MM: Ok.

AJ: When they come in, they take a scoop and go into the shed at Port Seton and take a scoop o prawns-

MM: Uhuh, uhuh.

AJ: -oot and weigh it to two pound and net weight.

MM: Right, right.

AJ: Two pound o prawns.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And then, they take that two pound o prawns and they count how many there is.

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: So, also at two pound, if there's twelve prawns-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -it's a certain price a kilo.

MM: Right.

AJ: But as they get- as there're more, if there's fifteen that drops. But it's counted to two- two prawns makes a big difference on the price!

MM: It would do, yeah.

AJ: Ken? And it... That's what they meant.

MM: So, the bigger the prawn, the more valuable?

AJ: The bigger the prawn, the more valuable.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: So, they worked wi selecting by the count.

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: Some... The men doon there all want it that way, they've always did it that way-

MM: Right.

AJ: -so that's what they want.

MM: Right.

AJ: Tom's went straight into the factory...

MM: Aye.

AJ: Because they trust the factory to...

MM: Yeah, well you'd have to trust them, wouldn't you?

AJ: You'd have to trust them, got to. But as he was saying, if he doesnae get the price that he thinks he should get, he's right on the phone saying-

**0h 56m 10s**

MM: Yeah, yeah.

AJ: -'those prawns was better than...' Or 'was there something wrong?'

MM: Yeah.

AJ: First of all you ask, 'I'm no pleased wi the price, but is there a reason?'

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Sometimes it's there's too many soft prawns.

MM: Right, what's a soft prawn?

AJ: A soft prawn is a prawn that has just got a new shell.

MM: Right.

AJ: See, prawns is like lobsters.

MM: Aye.

AJ: They stay in their holes and they get too big for their shell-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -so, as they grow, that's how ye get a prawn wi a line down the back.

MM: Uhuh.

AJ: It just [*imitates a cracking noise*] and it splits that.

MM: Right.

AJ: Now, whenever it splits that, underneath is a shell in the making but it's still-

MM: Aw, it's soft?

AJ: -it's soft.

MM: Right.

AJ: And it takes them about three weeks to harden up.

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: That's how they dinnae really come oot when they're soft shells.

MM: Aye.

AJ: But they do come oot sometimes and ye get soft shells, so-

MM: And ye get less money for them?

AJ: Aye, because then the buyer has to take them and she'll tail them-

MM: Yeah.

AJ: -and put them in with the tails, because if they go across to France and they're rubbery...

MM: Nah, they wouldn't want them.

AJ: No, no, we don't want that.



MM: No.

AJ: So, that's how... See, because once they make them into tails, they're frozen anyway.

MM: Yes, aye.

AJ: So, they're frozen.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, they dinnae ken the difference between the soft tails and the hard shells.

MM: Aye, aye. I think we'll leave it there for the day.

AJ: Oh, aye? Right.

MM: I've got loads more questions though.

AJ: Have you? *[laughter]*

MM: But is there anything in particular that you want to talk about for the recording? Maybe next time or...?

AJ: No, I hadnae thought o onything...

MM: I'll have a wee think if there's...

AJ: No, I hadnae thought o onything.

MM: I mean, it'd be good to maybe talk about the Box Meeting and stuff like that at some stage.

**0h 58m 04s**

AJ: Aye, well we could... That is an interesting...

MM: Aye, aye.

AJ: Subject, like, ken.

MM: Well, we'll maybe do that next time.

AJ: Aye. Because really... There's so few people really interested in it... We have a heritage...

MM: Yes.

AJ: And a fishing village, there's nowhere like it anywhere else other than a fishing heritage.

MM: Absolutely.

AJ: Ken? And it's something that... That's why I wanted to keep the Box Meeting going.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Because it... The thing is, fishing in the Forth always- fishermen always had money.

MM: Mm.

AJ: For some reason. No so much the crews, it was the owners had the money because the owners bought the boat and they got money for running the boat.

MM: Aye.

AJ: So, they always- it was like a businessman having a shop.

MM: Absolutely.

AJ: So, you ken? As crew, there wouldnae be a big percentage oot it.

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: But there was enough percentage oot it to make it worth our while.

MM: Aye.

AJ: The time [?] did some talking aboot- speaking about the Oyster Wars.

MM: Right.

AJ: The Oyster Wars. But at that time, these fishermen were making big, big money.

MM: Were they?

AJ: They did. They never disclosed *what* they were making.

MM: Aye.

AJ: But they were making big, big money because they were building big hooses.

MM: Yeah.

AJ: Ken? When the boat was struggling.

MM: Yes.

AJ: Funnily enough, that guy that was cook, that was James Ross, he'd been with us for years but he was on about I think it was the 1926 strike.

MM: Right.

**01h 00m 00s**

AJ: Well, the 1926 strike hit everybody hard but they had a soup kitchen.

MM: Did they, aye?

AJ: In Port Seton.

MM: Aye.

AJ: And there was a soup kitchen. And he went doon to the soup kitchen and he says 'I was sent home'. He says 'I was just a wee laddie, I was sent home'. 'Well, you're no needed here because your brothers is in a fishing boat'. So, they didnae really need the soup kitchen because they could bring fish home and cook it.

MM: Oh, right.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Yeah.

AJ: That was just something he passed on years ago to me-

MM: Aye.

AJ: -and it was just something that stuck in ma mind.

MM: Well, it must have made an impression on him, as well.

AJ: It made an impression on him and aw, ken.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ye ken? And likes o the fishermen-

MM: Uhuh?

AJ: They werenae involved in the soup kitchens.

MM: No.

AJ: Cause they had fish.

MM: Aye.

AJ: Ken?

MM: Aye.

AJ: Oh, well they hadnae much else but they had fish.

MM: Aye. So they had food?

AJ: Aye.

MM: I'll switch the recording off at that. Thanks very much.

AJ: Aye.