

Interviewee(s): Mrs. Brown (MB)	Interviewer(s): Unknown Female (UF)
Date of Interview: 1966-1968	Ref: EL2-4-1-1-T
REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Fisherrow, Musselburgh.

Running time: 00.00

[music plays]

[unclear]

[laughter]

MB: Oh well, I'd just started... When my mother went to the fish market, afore she went to the fishmarket [unclear] ye see? [unclear]. She had oor breakfast ready, oor porridge.

UF: Mhmm.

MB: And ye got ordinary porridge for to take, and have the dishes washed while my mother was at the harbour buying the fish.

UF: Yes, yes.

MB: And then we had to go and have a bath, and carry two pails o water down to this bath.

UF: Yes.

MB: For my mother to wash her fish.

UF: Oh.

MB: Ye see they were aw lying on this tray. Ye see?

UF: That's before you went to school? In the morning?

MB: We went to school in the morning, and that had to be done for my mother coming up. And of course we helped my mother too, ye know?

UF: Yes.

MB: Course we put them... And then my mother learned us how to put the cord into the skull.

UF: Oh, yes. To pack them in?

MB: Well ye put the head down first and the tail up, ye see?

UF: Yes.

MB: But ye would see that [unclear] gave me the photograph.

UF: Oh yes.

MB: That was my mother's. [unclear]. If there was plaice or turbot or halibut, that had to go round

the skull. And then the small fish, whiting and haddock, had to go in the bottom of the skull, ye see?

Running time: 02.00

UF: Yes, yes.

MB: And then it made them, well, ye just knew...

UF: Knew where to look!

MB: But ye see, my mother learned how to do that, her mother [unclear].

UF: Yes.

MB: Ye see, so, it's been always in the world.

UF: Like an apprenticeship?

MB: Yes. [unclear] But it had to be done for my mother. Had to go to Musselburgh station, and it stood in Wood Street then.

UF: Uh huh.

MB: And my mother had to go to Musselburgh station to [unclear] and the go up to the station, Waverley Station, and walk from up to North Bridge and down to Stockbridge. [unclear] Street and all the like o these streets roundabout.

UF: Yes.

MB: Whole day was on yer legs, the full day from five o'clock in the morning. The only time ye had a rest was sittin on a train. It was the only time that ye had.

UF: Uh huh.

MB: That was all the rest he took... He had.

UF: And how heavy would that be? When you set off in the morning?

MB: Five o'clock...

UF: No, how heavy was the fish?

MB: Oh, well, the real weight was... I don't know whether other peoples did it, but my sister - my idlest sister - used to go to North Queensferry, and I used to go to Inverkeithing.

UF: Yes.

MB: And there was two officials come down and said that we had to get oor baskets away.

UF: Oh, yes.

MB: With the fish. And if sometimes... It didn't last very long. I don't know who spoke for it, but it didn't last very long. And sometimes it used to be four and sixpence.

UF: To pay for your fish?

MB: We had to pay, after paying oor fare.

UF: Goodness.

MB: And it was really... Well it wasn't worth it sometimes, ye know?

Running time: 04.00

UF: No.

MB: Well it didn't last very long, and I mind there were one day that my sister asked the foreman [unclear] Course, when you travel with the railway ye got acquaint with them, ye know? Ye get tae know them. And she says it wis rainin this day she says, and her basket wis empty. She says "Dae ye mind and weigh the basket and see how much it would be?" Twenty pound for the empty basket.

UF: Goodness.

MB: Which is the creel, and of course the leather band and the [unclear], down at the foot of the creel, and [unclear] at the foot of the skull, and oor boards - fish boards.

UF: Well what would it weight when it was full?

MB: Oh, many a time ye felt burdened down with it.

UF: Must've been about sixty pounds.

MB: I don't know really how I wis able to do it. Many many thought "oh, it's more than a hundredweight."

UF: Really?

MB: More than a hundredweight, for ye know it wis a box of fish.

UF: Yes.

MB: Well my sister had the fish - a box o coddling and a box o haddock - and we'd divide up between us so it wis a box o fish.

UF: Goodness.

MB: And then that wisnae counting oor kippers. We'd eh, a box o kippers and eh, half a box o kippers.

UF: Some of them were overflowing into the creel. When you set off you have a few fish in the creel as well?

MB: No, no so much in the creel, unless maybe an order.

UF: Oh, yes.

MB: If ye got a special order you wid mibbe put them into the bottom of the creel.

UF: Yes.

MB: Ir [unclear] crabs, to keep them away from the fish.

UF: Yes.

MB: Ye put them intae the... I put crabs intae the bottom o my basket. The crabs, ye know, carrying them, ye were never [unclear].

[tape is changed]

Running time: 06.00

MB: When a fisherman get married tae a fisher girl, the only people he sees when the [unclear] goes wi the bucket, it'll be awright.

UF: Yes, yes.

[unclear]

MB: They know their work.

UF: You were telling me that your brother didn't go to sea, because your father had died before that.

MB: No, my father died no long ago... No long afore that.

UF: Yes.

MB: And he, eh, wis jist a boy fae school, and he come down and he said "mother, I've got a job." She said "a job [unclear]". [unclear] started tae be a barber, ye know? And then there wis a shop vacant, and Airthur Jamieson took a liking to my brother, and he then said Jimmy should start in that job. And that wis over the coal works in [unclear].

UF: Oh, yes.

MB: Two wee shops they were. Of course he asked my mother and my mother was feared for the danger, wi razors and one thing and everything, ye know? And him being a young boy, by this time wid be aboot seventeen, sixteen or seventeen, and my mother just thought he wisnae strong enough for the... Hold on tae the shoulders. And he wis aye tormenting my mother, my mother went up tae see Mr. Jamieson himself, and he said "Well, Mrs. Hamilton, I'm just sign to tell you, if you don't start him, I'll start him," [unclear]. And then of course my mother started him intae the business. And he got on fine with it.

Running time: 08.00

UF: Yes.

MB: Til war, of course, broke out. And he had to quit the business... Had to go to the war and put the business. And then of course, my brother took pneumonia and then he went to the sea, and the ship was [unclear]. And it was in, eh, but wherever, it wis a crew, and they [unclear] with one thing and everything, and of course it went intae his chest... His lungs and his chest and he died... Several times, I think twice he went down to the sanatorium, my mother was awful worried. And he wis married by this time. And, eh, he wis down, and then of course he got home. And I mind when my mother, when he went down the first time, he said "mother, if I havnae got it," he said "I'll have it where I come back. When I come home." And I think he was twice down at the sanatorium. He died 36 year old.

UF: He would have... He'd said when he... When your mother wanted him to go to sea, he said that he wouldn't... He didn't have his father.

MB: [unclear] my mother said "No." So he says, "I just thought," he says "That I've nae other body, tae tank the same interest in it as what my father wid have been." And that was the way he didnae go tae the sea.

UF: Yes.

MB: He wis at the fishin, when he wis young, before he went tae the [unclear].

UF: Yes.

MB: Before he went tae the barbers.

Running time: 10.00

UF: Normally, the son would go into the fishing with his father, that would be the normal...

MB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

UF: And if there were several sons, would they all try to go to sea?

MB: Yes. Well in olden times.

UF: Yes.

MB: In olden times. But they're no so much intae the fishing now as they used to, they're all, nearly, tradesmen, ye see? They have a trade now, ye see? And, eh, it's different aw together.

UF: And nobody minds that they marry trades folk now? It's not important to marry fisherfolk?

MB: Oh, yes. Fisherfolk.

UF: Do they still like them to marry fisherfolk?

MB: Yes, yes, They do.

UF: Even although they're not working...

MB: Oh no, disnae matter, yes.

UF: Oh.

MB: They like [unclear] keep up...

UF: Keep up the tradition.

MB: Uh huh.

UF: Yes.

MB: Course, my husband's family, my mother-in-law [unclear].