

Michael Wallwork Interview Transcription (RAW Audio Time Stamps) - 21/09/23

Interviewer - Shirley Boothroyd

SB: I'm Shirley and I'm here as part of the Peterson's Oral Histories Project and the date is 21st September (2023). Would you like to introduce yourself?

MW: I'm Michael Wallwork, I'm here being interviewed.

SB: It's lovely to meet you, do you mind me asking what your date of birth is?

MW: 29.07.53.

SB: And have you always lived in Grimsby?

[0:00:47] MW: I went away to Staffordshire for me job for a while but all the other times I lived in Grimsby, on the West Marsh.

[0:00:56] SB: So that's over the other side.

[0:00:58] MW: Over the railway lines.

[0:01:00] SB: What's your connection with the docks?

[0:01:04] MW: It goes back to me grandfather, cause me grandfather came here from Manchester. I got him on a census from 1896 on a Grimsby trawler, but he came here from Manchester, so obviously must have been worse on the mills than worse on the trawlers. And then me grandfather on me mother's side, he was a fisherman. Me brothers took fishing up, I tried it, didn't like it but I did work as a barrow boy on the dockside there, that was during school holidays and just after I left school. And then just I come on the docks as and when necessary, in between jobs, something like that. And Peterson's, that came up, one of me friends was working there, any jobs? And he said yeah, come on and I went in Peterson's doing that, still got the scars on my thumbs and me fingers, from putting the herrings on the racks, the bones are there, it's not so bad now but it used to be really bad, you can still see some of the scars, never healed because of the salt, so they were still there. (Inaudible) It was a good laugh. Just the smell was -

[0:02:15] SB: Did you start there straight from school?

[0:02:16] MW: No it was about 1972 so I'd be 18, in them days if you didn't fancy a job, if you didn't like a job or the job went, cause I did building work as well, you just went to the next place. From there I went to the rope works down off Convamore Road making twine, and you just did it around town. Barrow boy, at around 14 trying to pull them barrows around, don't know if you've seen them have you -

SB: No I haven't, I've heard about them -

MW: (Inaudible) What's that vegetable market in London, they've got those big barrows haven't they, well that's the size of them and then they put the kits of fish on them, and you've seen them, the boxes haven't you -

SB: Yes

MW: Well you put a lot of them on and whatever age you was if you couldn't do the job you couldn't do the job and the most dangerous part was them two ramps you see them out there like that. You had to go down one and up the other, now you've got to really start running and there used to be a police officer stood there to make sure it's safe for you to go across and if you was lucky there would be some other fish

merchants down at the bottom to give you a push up. But if you didn't make it first time, that was it, you was stuffed. (Inaudible) and make sure you didn't slip as well cause that would have run you over, but as a 14 year old lad you just had to do it, but they're well balanced, they're very good.

[0:03:47] SB: But they didn't have sides on them did they?

[0:03:49] MW: No and they was metal boxes, food (?) exchange, aluminium boxes, so they're very slippery, the easiest bit was taking them when they'd packed the fish into the wooden boxes, that was another job.

[0:03:59] SB: So did you ever have a time where you did that and it fell off?

[0:04:03] MW: Oh yeah, but then you had to just pick it (up) because there was no real hygiene, you just, if it fell on the floor you just put it back in the box because most of the time pulling them they hadn't been filleted yet so you was (?) from the market because it was usually Hale and White's which was round the Pontoon on the corner there cause me brother worked there and he got me going into there -

SB: Hale and White's?

MW: Hale and White's, yeah. If you went round the bend it was just there, near the cafe, cause that cafe was a nice one, a big one from the back there, never known the name of it though. Cause I always looked forward to it, the smell, you went in there and you always had, cause I didn't always take sugar, but you go in there and had a sweet mug of tea and a sandwich, by on cold mornings you really enjoyed it. Oh yes, you didn't bother about the smell then. You just washed your hands in whatever water there was -

SB: It would be very cold down here wouldn't it -

MW: Oh yeah, (inaudible) they never had heaters, (inaudible) the filleters, (inaudible) but if their hands got cold they'd put them in the cold water because the cold water was warmer than the air and that's how they did it. No hot water for them. They just swilled it down, there was big taps all the way down, you couldn't drink out of it because it wasn't safe, that's how they swilled down, just some kind of salt water or summats, never tried it, I was told not to touch it.

[0:05:27] SB: So can you remember your first day at Peterson's, what did you do?

[0:05:32] MW: Well you just went in and they just showed you what to do cause it wasn't really hard work or didn't take your brains much. I tried to remember it, you went through the main door and to the left was your brine bins and beyond the brine bins was the machines and you put your fish in and it take the heads off and cut them open and then they'd come down and we'd get a box full and chuck them in the brine, leave them for a while.

Then there was another machine which is a boning machine because we had boneless kippers as well and that was a joke! May as well get the normal ones. And what we did then we wait til they're brined and we said we'd have the, I can't remember what we called them, but they was just pieces of wood (inaudible) in them, and then we just put the fish on there and they'd get stacked up somewhere and then later on a bloke came in later to put them up the chimney, because, you're not going up there, that's a specialist job. Yeah right, (inaudible) don't want to be up there anyway.

And we just do that, and there'd be other stuff, like sometimes you'd get some haddock in, smoke the haddock, it was mostly kippers then and bloaters, never did the bloaters, don't know where they got the bloaters from. Cause they always used to be stacked outside, they did. But don't know where he did that, it weren't in that place. But it wasn't a very big place.

And round the corner was the cafe for that one, and like I say, me mate worked there, it was just one of those things, you took a job on cause the money wasn't that much but it was a bit more than the dole, I

can't remember what it was, I always say it was something like £4.50 on the dole and about £6.50 down the dock but in those days, '72, two quid was a lot of money, heck of a lot of money, you could go out for that. They always said you could go out for ten bob, but you could go out for a couple of quid, you could have a good night out. We didn't bother with fish and chips, it was always too late, cause we were going to the night club and then we'd meet people who we knew who was fishermen, like me brother if he came in dock, we're not going to pay for anything then, he lead me astray he did. I was supposed to be at school and I was down the pub with him.

[0:07:48] SB: Well they were well paid weren't they? The fishermen?

[0:07:56] MW: Well you could think it was. It's hard to say really cause you only saw it when they was well paid, but I've been at home and they've landed in debt which is the trawler hadn't made enough money cause they was the last to be paid. The owners, the running costs and everything like that and the skipper. The skipper was sort of the men as well but everything else went first then it was the men, then they had to take their food money out of it while they was away and many a time me brother and me dad, they've landed in debt. They'd still get a weekly wage, something about £10 a week I think, because I remember a bloke, well a registered letter used to come, and me mam used to get that every week, so they got a wage but that was taken off the settling money as well so (?) they got it for nothing.

[0:08:46] SB: The wives used to come down on a Friday didn't they to get their pay?

[0:08:51] MW: Some did, my mam never did, like I say they used to deliver it to the house in a registered envelope, that's how much £10 was worth in them days, in the 60s, registered envelope.

Yes some trawler firms did that, just depended who they worked for. I think Ross's, it depends how many blokes they had. My uncle, he worked for Bostons (Boston Deep Sea Trawlers), I think me Aunty Doris used to come down to get her money but they never come down dock otherwise, that was it. Couldn't come down and see them off, not allowed to, or see them in. I did that a few times, (?) at the dock gates, not the Royal Docks, the fish dock gates, you know, jumping from there onto the trawler. Meet me brothers because by then when they'd be coming in they'd be having a can or two so I used to jump on there with him and same when he come in on one of these stern trawlers, well it got stuck in the middle of the dock and I was supposed to be meeting someone later, oh well! There was no mobile phones in them days so you couldn't let them know, supposed to be meeting with me mates, supposed to be drinking with them, think it was a Saturday, something like that.

Lots of things happened on the docks, but if you asked somebody, where's such and such, well everyone knew Fish Dock Road, that was it. If you said there was a job, where's it at? They wouldn't give you an address, they might give you an address but no one knew it, they'd just give you a name so you'd see the copper at the gate cause it was police then, they was always there so you'd say where's such and such and they'd say go down the road there, second right, down that alley there. Or just down the Pontoon or up Pneumonia or summats like that, they'd tell you where it was, but no one knew, like you say, where's Wharncliffe Road. (Inaudible) I wouldn't know Wharncliffe Road and nobody else would. We just didn't know, we just go by the names of the companies. That's just how it worked, because the police knew everybody and in them days you could get some fish off your boss to take home, but they had to give you a chitty, as they called it, and if you didn't have that and the police stopped you and they caught you that was it, you were done. Oh aye, there was no taking fish off here without permission and a few people got caught -

SB: What would happen to them?

[0:11:06] MW: They'd maybe go to court or they might get away with it. You'd get fined a couple of shillings, cause in them days everything went to court. Actually it was easier to get on the docks then than it is now. Cause me daughter and her husband, he doesn't come from around here, they live up north of Skipton, they came down to see us in July on a Sunday, they said, we want to see around the docks, so I

said, I'll see if I can get you on but park your car out the way and get in my car. So I got to the gate and "Oh, where are you going?", and I don't know what my son in law must have thought of me, said, I'm going to Yearsley's, "What for?", I'm going to see someone about a driving job, "Oh, right, yes. Have you got your ID?" What? "Your driving licence" Eeek, no! And I'm going to see about a driving job! He says "Go on then, on you go". I says, I really want to be down here but I couldn't turn left because they'd be watching on the cameras and that lot to see where I was so I took them further up near where the slips were, but like today, they wanted to know where I was going. But they got cafes here so why are they stopping people if they want us to see it, they've got workshops haven't they as well -

SB: That's right -

[0:12:19] MW: Yeah, back to where we was, I'm trying to think what happened when I was on the docks, just what I've told you really. As a youth, and Peterson's, my mate said, cause I went with him, I think we started at half seven cause no-one ever - in Grimsby in them days there was two roads and that was the A46 to Lincoln and the A17 (A16) to Louth and that was it. But that's why I always called this place a large village as a small town cause everyone knows everybody. I moved away for a bit so I got to not know so many people but, you know, families intermarried with each around the town, well usually West Marsh stayed together and the East Marsh stayed together.

They'd meet down in the pubs down Freeman Street because that's where most of them were when they landed, they'd always say, oh there's a Wesley coming in - that's a bloke coming in on his trawler because if they hadn't had a ship for a couple of days or summat like that and they'd been out of work, there's a Wesley coming in and they get a couple of bob off him, you know. That's all they needed so everyone when they'd settled it up, cause they always settled in cash, they didn't go in the bank, they'd go with all this money in their pockets, and very rare, vary rarely they got jumped on, what they used to call in them days, rolled. That was very rare it happened, and they'd go down there with all this cash in their pockets and especially the taxi drivers, they would look after them, they'd keep an eye on them, say, oh, give us your money here and they know who's got it, even though they was out of their tree (drunk) they'd still get their money back.

And they all bought their suits but that's when they had a good trip, it's when they had a bad trip! Like they said, three day millionaires! First I heard about that was when they made that film (inaudible) but then again, they might have called them that on the East Marsh cause the West Marsh, it was a bit newer area cause this was the really old area the East Marsh. I've got maps from 1926 (of the West Marsh) and most of the houses where I lived in, Boulevard Avenue, wan't even built and there's a train line come through there to the mill, the paper mill, that was the first job I had when I left school.

Me dad when he was going away, Coxon's Taxis, still there, I always remember that, when he was going away he'd be there, couple of his mates on the same trawler they'd come round and see him, and he'd send me, I'd be 13 or summats like that, to the off licence to get his rum, and they'd still sell you it, yeah go on, it's for me dad, yeah go on, take that -

SB: How times have changed -

[0:15:07] MW: Haven't they just? They always said, the fishermen was always drunk, they wan't, you might get one or two, but I think most of them was dry ships. When sailing out they'd get a couple of cans and when they're coming back they'd have a bit but most of the time it was dry ships and the skipper wouldn't have it.

[0:15:27] SB: Do you remember any of the superstitions around fishing?

[0:15:33] MW: Yeah, me dad wouldn't let us wear green on sailing day in fact cause me mam knitted me a green jumper and I couldn't wear it when they was sailing and they would never allow anything to do with owls in the house -

SB: Owls? -

MW: Owls, I've no idea, that's one of me mother's, I don't know whether there was others but me mam said no, no owls in the house, no pictures or nothing like that, and she never explained why but that's me mother .

That's the only two superstitions me mam had - well she wouldn't let women (go) down when they were sailing either, I could go down but no-one else could, but that was the only two superstitions me mam had and that's the only two I can remember. I've no idea what the green had to do with anything. No idea at all, but we just said, yeah alright, and we just got on with it, we didn't bother. We just got on with life.

Lots of people we knew as fisherman, that's the problem, they've all died though, I mean me elder brother, and me younger brother, he did it as well and he'll be 60 odd, towards late 60s so they're all getting on a bit and he's one of the younger ones, in it's heyday when we had a fishing fleet, before we joined Europe. And that's when it was really full, the North Wall, that's when you could walk from ship to ship, and as we called it Scrops corner, all the seine netters, that's where the Danes landed, cause that was the nickname for the Danes, we called them Scrops. I don't know what Scrops means, that's what we called them. Might be a Danish word for all I know but it's usually an insult anyway!

Ours was out near Ross House for our seine netters, pair trawlers and that lot. Yes, Scrops Corner. Cause they used to go in Freeman Street but the first one they went in (inaudible) I always get them mixed up, Cairns and Cotties, the first bar on the right, I think it's Cotties, and Cairns was further down that's where they usually went in. There wouldn't be any fights nothing like that, they'd be the Grimsby fishermen in there. The most chance you'd got of a fight is when the Hull fishermen got together, Hull fishermen and Grimsby fishermen that's when you're bound to get the fights cause me dad used to say, I don't think they ever did it, that when they were coming out of the lock gates and there's a Hull trawler going that way they'd aim straight for them to try and get them to turn away and get grounded. Most of theirs was grey and white and ours was black and white. Oh aye, there was a lot of competition in that way. We were still the biggest, they didn't like that neither.

[0:18:17] Pause

[0:18:21] **SB:** So you worked, no you lived on the West Marsh?

[0:18:24] **MW:** West Marsh, Boulevard Avenue -

[0:18:25] **SB:** So how did you get to the docks, did you cycle, walk?

[0:18:28] **MW:** Bike or the Number 7 stopped outside me mam's house and it stopped at Riby Square so you could get the bus if I wanted to or I'd use me scooter, me Lambretta to get to down here when I was 18, when I was younger it would have to be the bus or me bike. It was easy to get here, no hardship for anybody really cause, well the town wasn't as big as it is now. At Boulevard Avenue, beyond us it was fields and then the village of Great Coates. There was no Wybers Wood, Willows, nothing, not much this way and Nunsthorpe hadn't been built in the 30's I think, 30s to 50s. So no-one was really far away and buses always ended up somewhere near here -

[0:19:15] **SB:** And I should think the majority of the workforce would be round this area wouldn't it, the East Marsh?

[0:19:20] **MW:** Yes, there would have been a lot, not the majority, I would have thought it's spread around the town quite well because there was a lot of factories, you could always get into them (inaudible), but I think womenwise you'd get more of them from there, they worked in the factories and stuff like that. You still got some from round my way worked, and a lot of them did nets as well at home, they get the twine delivered for making nets for Cosalt and did that work at home.

[0:19:57] SB: Was there anywhere on the docks where they did the net making? Or was it all made at home?

[0:20:04] MW: I'm not sure where they made them on the docks, I think at one time they made them at the Ropery down off Convamore Road there but they made nylon fishing lines as well. Yes, I'm sure Cosalt, in the shops, I think they had a net room up there but they've knocked it all down now, the best part, the really big one with the canopy and everything like that, that's all gone. I'm sure there was a net factory up there cause they ended up doing life rafts up there in the end Cosalt, cause they brought out the first - went on top of the nets, like a buoy on the nets - they bought one out and they sold it worldwide, I remember seeing an advert in one of these old papers. It was all over the place, didn't realise it was so big. I was up in Scotland somewhere, and there was a shop there for them.

[0:21:12] SB: So what about social life, on the docks, social areas?

[0:21:18] MW: Social area was mainly the cafes, that was it -

SB: Were there many?

MW: Oh yes there was quite a few cause they weren't far to walk from where you was working. There was a big white one where the roundabout is just near where that is, on the rail side. There was one further along down there, further down there was one near the slips, a big black thing I think I remember, then down Fish Dock Road here there was three or four down here. So there was plenty of cafes cause they'd start early and they'd have a break maybe about 8 o'clock or 7, summat like that, cause they'd done a lot of work and the auctions had been going on, they'd been collecting all the fish.

You've seen them little pieces of paper, where they used to stick like that and you chuck on top of the things (boxes of fish) so you knew where they was and they'd stick more than one on cause someone might take it off and take that fish, so they'd put a load on.

There was a bar called TC's but I think that was after the fishing finished because it was something else before then, which was just where near where Peterson's is -

SB: It was like a social club wasn't it, TC's?

MW: Yeah, if you come out of where Peterson's was and turn left it was on the left there. I don't think that opened until the late on times. But the Oberon, it's on end of King Edward Street just under the flyover, that used to open at 6 o'clock in the morning for the dockers on the dock side or the blokes that had been working here so finishing work and go for a pint on the way home. That used to be a regular. And the rest of the time it was called clubs and pubs, they used to use the clubs a lot because the clubs used to be cheaper than the pubs but then they also finished the pubs at 3 o'clock then go to the clubs til the pubs were open again. That's how it used to happen! There was a couple down there and down Corporation Road there were two or three, Frontiersman, that's been knocked down, that was off Lord Street. There was clubs all over the town, tons of them but not so many left now, they've all just sort of gone by the way. Because, the younger ones don't bother with them so much, like we was, we used to get to them (but) cause everyone can drink all the time so they don't bother so much. You don't get the outings and that. That was very social cause most of your pubs was full.

[0:23:51] SB: Well that's right yes, they used to do outings, didn't they? -

MW: Oh yeah, do outings with kids and everything -

SB: I remember my grandad, was he in the Hainton? -

MW: The Hainton Club, yeah, that's still going, that's down (inaudible) I never went to it. I've been in it a couple of times to play dominoes but never bothered with it cause never came this side. And then you had factories had they own social clubs. The last one I've seen is Ciba's which is now Novartis, that's still there but it's not used as a club anymore. The family used to rent it for the night for the family Christmas party cause there was a lot of us, there was ten of us plus parents, then as they grew up they had their own kids so it ended up quite a lot of us around, hell of a lot, still going as well, we only lost two. The eldest one, Brian, he went a while ago and then me sister, she had a stroke, she lived in Belgium, there's still eight of us left and they're well in their 80s. Me brother in law, his 90th birthday was last year, but he came from London way on, we don't talk about that!

[0:25:09] SB: So do they still live in the area?

[0:25:10] MW: Yeah, most of them do, one brother he went in the navy, he did his full term but he lives in Australia and me sister moved to Belgium cause her husband was a fisherman out of Ostende, and the rest of them live in Immingham, the Barrow, Grimsby, round here. My nephews and nieces, a lot of them live round here still, some have moved away, not so many, born and bred. They say if you see a Wallwork name it's our family, it's the only ones there is.

[0:25:45] SB: And do you still keep up with maybe people that you worked with at Peterson's?

[0:25:51] MW: Terry, he died, Terry Tidswell. He was doing a food thing at one time, cause that's who I went with there. I can't remember who else was there now, Leslie Winkle (?) I used to hang around with him anyway, for a drink and stuff like this when we used to go out together and that lot and all the rest of the mob but people from school I still see. They're all still round the town, some have moved away and some just drifted off and you don't see them any more.

[0:26:25] SB: Did most of them go to work on the docks?

[0:26:29] MW: No, a few of them got apprenticeships, the wages they was on, they was on about £2 a week, when I was on, well I know it wasn't a lot more but it seemed a lot more than them, they was on next to nothing cause they was proper apprentices. Some went in the main factories, down the bank (Humber bank) and got apprenticeships there, and I flashed (?) at the mill but I wasn't bothered about that cause me brothers worked there and when you left school you had two choices from the West Marsh and the East Marsh. Either the mill, not for this lot, not for the East Marsh, or fishing or the docks. You don't need O levels, nothing like that, that was for them from posher areas like Scatha (Scartha), places like that. Cause I was junior school in '64 that's when they closed Armstrong school and opened Hereford and that was a bit of a culture clash for the people from Scatha and that lot, they was coming to meet people from the West Marsh area and we wasn't posh and they seemed to think they was.

The teachers, they come in there with all these good intentions and it didn't work, cause you'd got the teachers from Armstrong they would just get hold of you and give you a good whack, they walked round in big black gowns still. I always look at it this way, most of the older teachers in them days was suffering from post traumatic stress cause most of them had been in the war, the older teachers. My house master, he had a broken back from jumping out the plane at Arnhem but thinking back now they'd been through the war, soldiers and that lot, post traumatic stress, that's what they were suffering from but it wasn't recognised. I've seen Mr Crow, he'd chuck people through the window, luckily the window was open, luckily there was the ground floor at Hereford some of it was and his classroom's on the ground floor and he'd got hold of this kid and just chucking him through the window. He didn't throw chalk at you he chucked a board rubber, murder he was -

SB: I remember that well -

MW: - but, didn't do me any harm. But the teachers from Scatha area they was sort of young and you will do this and that and they gave up in the end, they got as bad as the rest of them. Plus the team at

Armstrong used to be, they wasn't one to mix school, so those that had been there and hadn't quite left school, went to Hereford well they got mixed, they weren't used to it. So that was another shock for some people.

But as I say not people that I knew from that area came on the dock, we all went somewhere else. Like I joined the Fire Brigade in '74 so that's my career going up there then, if not I'd have probably come back on the docks. My brother, he was a fisherman when in the end he spent 26 years at Young's ending up as a manager and that was one up from me. Some were police, some went to Courtauld's and places like that.

We all tried fishing but, it wan't for me, I couldn't be doing that all day, I was only in the North Sea I wasn't even up at Iceland or Newfoundland or them places. I've seen picture of the ice on the masts until they started putting tracers in to melt it, they worked, but not brilliantly and if they didn't chose it off, you went over. And the Cod Wars as well. There was one in '76 there was one before that as well. We had two Cod Wars.

[0:30:39] SB: So I've been in some of the buildings and they weren't really pleasant places -

[0:30:46] MW: Well, put it this way, was life in them days pleasant anyway? You was brought up poor, your mother made your house as best as she could. We had no money, so no it's not posh going in them but it's not like your house, I'm not going in there look at that, you just got in, got on with your life, not be so mamby pamby about it, just got on with life. If it's mucky, it's mucky, so what?

[0:31:17] SB: I can't imagine young people want to do that then?

[0:31:19] MW: If they walked into Peterson's when I walked into Peterson's, especially looking at the smoke thing, thick black, I'm never eating a kipper in my life again! Tell you what, it's like a teapot, if you clean that you won't get the flavour.

[0:31:40] SB: Do you like fish?

[0:31:42] MW: I do, oh aye. The problem is I like quite a lot and the wife will eat it but she's not as keen on it as I am, especially smoked fish, I have to do that in a morning with all the doors and everything open, to get rid of it all.

[0:31:58] SB: Is it kippers for breakfast?

[0:31:59] MW: No, I'm not keen on kippers, it's usually smoked haddock, I like that, that's what I have, cause if I see a bargain I'll get one, but Enderby's, I looked on Saturday but it's expensive that, what he was selling it for. That yellow stuff, I'll eat it on a push if I'm given it, but usually I like the natural stuff, natural smoked. No kippers, there's too many bones, I can't be doing with it. Even when they're boneless I'll say no, not for me. I'll eat mackerel, tinned mackerel and stuff like that but then you get sardines, you open them they've got all bones in, I'm there scraping them off, cause I've got a thing about bones. Like me dad used to say, where we'd get skate, he'd say, what's up with that? I'd scrape the fish off the bone, no, you eat the bones as well, the soft bones. Same as salmon, I have to get the bones out of the salmon as well, hasn't put me off it. So I don't eat skate but I'll eat salmon but especially the fresh salmon cause I'll go and buy a side of salmon and freeze that. Oh I eat loads of fish, yes. Love the stuff.

[0:33:01] SB: What's your favourite recipe? What's your favourite way of eating fish?

[0:33:06] MW: Well I usually do it fried or baked. Salmon I'd put something on it, like salad, me smoked haddock, I'll boil that or I'll put it in hot water and microwave it cause its a quicker way to do it, don't fry that. I'll fry or bake it or whatever. I don't do fancy things with fish, that's it. The only good thing about cod is to make fish cakes, you don't fry cod, apart from the cheeks, cheeks and tongues - I was the only one

in our family that liked the tongues, little bit chewier so it didn't bother me but the cheeks, they've gone stupid price, they were more or less given away at one time -

SB: - yes, I thought they were sort of a cheap, if you didn't have much money you'd go and buy some cod cheeks -

MW: - you look at the price now, cause it's pure fish and it's no worms in it because it's obviously the cheeks, like a pig's chap, when you'd get them. But that amazed me when I first went off to sea cause although I come from a fishing family me dad would come in dock and bring this sea bass home, with some fish, some fries for the neighbours and some for us and mam had haddock, yes that's going in the pan to boil, not frying that. Maybe some fresh cod roe, she'd boil that up. Love that, that was lovely, and then the haddocks she'd - I think we hadn't got a fridge (until) about the late 60s - she had a pantry so it kept fresh for so long but not too long and she never battered it, always floured it and that's what me mam did.

Everything to me's for the fish, you ruin the taste if you start going silly with it, anything more than floured, yeah you have to buy it from the fish shop, battered but some places do it nice, some don't but yeah, just a bit of fish put in a pan, even without flour on, you get the right flavour. If you get the right fish that is.

That's what amazed me when I first went fishing, you come from a fishing family, you get your haddock about that size and your cod about that size don't you (gesturing), and the first time I went they put this fish and I say, what's that? They say it's a cod, about that big (gesturing), massive thing. I said, what are you supposed to do with that? Well you gut it. Well how do I hold it to cut it then? He says, well poke it's eyes out. Yeah right! No, like this look, and he had to hold it in its eyes and then (filleting actions) off you go. I say that big but to me it might just have seemed that big, but it was big, I'd never seen something that big before. You had to put your (fingers) in the eyes otherwise it slips away, into its gills and bring it down its stomach then bring it all up like that then overboard (the guts). That was it, didn't like fishing.

And I was on the deck and they said, look out, I said what? And I nearly got, was it a monkfish? Big mouth like that and it was ready to get me in me boots and said, that would have gone through them and it wouldn't have let go. Right, I'll watch that next time, yeah, don't sit on them.

I must admit the first time I went I was three days laid up, I was alright in the Humber but as soon as I got into the North Sea that was it, no, here we go. But after that I was alright (inaudible) I was like, come on them, are we starting fishing today? They says what, look outside, so I opened the hatch, looked out and I could see the swell, oh me life, we're not fishing then?

[0:36:49] SB: When you were at Peterson's you know the wood at the bottom of the chimneys, the chippings, where does that come from?

[0:37:00] MW: To be quite honest, it just appeared. I'm not sure what they used but I reckon they got a lot of it from the box makers cause you had Faulkner's down Chapman Street, then you had another one somewhere else, think it began with an S, not sure if they weren't down Railway Street. They made all the boxes cause there were no polystyrene boxes, all wood boxes so maybe they got the sawdust from there.

These days its all oak smoked and beech smoked, I don't think there was owt like that, just sawdust and some shavings. There used to be a bloke work all night, or you'd go home and come back every hour or so to just check them all and get them going again. And you have to remember, just as we was leaving he'd be setting them all up, cause the things would have been filled up we had to pass everything to everybody and he'd come in, get his sawdust sorted out, get it lit, get it going -

[0:37:56] SB: Then they smoked through the night did they?

[0:37:58] MW: Yeah, smoked overnight. One or two hours, full smoke, don't know what they do these days, whether they do that still but I don't think they was anything special about the chippings and

sawdust. I think that must have been it because there was so much timber used to get the wooden boxes. Who went out of town, nobody did, well put it this way, if you worked at Immingham on the docks, (inaudible) you're going out of town working, is that overnight? It was an unusual thing for people to be working out of town in the 60s and 70s cause it's so close, why move out the town when all the work was here you needed.

Like Corporation Road, why go down Freeman Street when you've got Corporation Road, that was as many shops if not more than Freeman Street just no market, that's all, you could get anything down there. Then there's all your corner shops and regarding Boulevard Avenue, you had Lister Street, you had shops on each corner, Lord Street, shops all the way all over the place. They was all over, chip shops and everything, so you didn't need to go anywhere, that's why we very rarely came over to Freeman Street and then only with mam.

[0:39:08] SB: All little convenience shops really weren't they? Sold everything.

[0:39:15] MW: Yes, Freeman Street was no cheaper than them. Mrs Hobson's, she was down Lister Street, Fielder's the butcher, Durkin's, and there was Hancock's the newsagents, I had two paper rounds there, who else was down there? Can't remember the name of the other woman, I knew her grandson as well, used to go out with him, ran with him, used to have a different name, but that was just down there then in Lord Street you had Plant's, Christine Plant's parents. You don't know Christine Plant do you?

SB: No.

MW: She got an MBE or something like that cause she did scouts and guides and stuff. Yeah probably someone knows her. The vegetable shop, Burkitt's butchers, not the same Burkitt as the one down Cromwell Road and Heneage Road, must be the same family, anyway there was more further up. We had Wall Street bakery, that was nice, nice buns there. And another thing, you don't hear anywhere else, bottom of Lister Street just on the right there, there was a little shop but next to it was a Toc H and we used to go there cause, well you go there and you'd get a cup of tea and summats to eat for nothing, us kids we want to go there, get some biscuits. Toc H, t, o, c with an h. It was a religious thing from the First World War supporting soldiers and their thing was like Aladdin's lamp, their sign was that. There was a meeting hall there, all wooden inside (inaudible) and I don't know where else they was but (that's the) only one I've ever seen. So you Google Toc H and you'll see what they's about. It's interesting wasn't it, things like that? All we thought about was freebies. Got no biscuits at home? Go down there, get a drink.

[0:41:08] SB: Well that's been so interesting.

[0:41:08] MW: Good, as I say, I've only got a certain amount of knowledge.

[0:41:08] SB: Yes but you've got a wider knowledge and that's really interesting and useful.

[0:41:08] MW: You got some about the town, bits. There you go, we try our best.

[0:41:08] SB: Thank you so much -

[0:41:08] MW: No problem at all -

[0:41:08] SB: - for coming in and spending time with us.

[0:41:08] MW: if she needs anything she's got my email address, hasn't she?

[0:41:08] SB: Yes

