



About QueenSpark Books

QueenSpark Books was founded in 1972 as part of a campaign to save the historic Royal Spa in Brighton's Queen's Park from being converted to a casino. The campaign was successful and it inspired participants to start collecting memories of people living in Brighton and Hove to preserve for future generations. QueenSpark Books is now the longest-running organisation of its kind in the UK.

More than one hundred books later, as part of our 45th anniversary celebrations, we are making the original texts of many of our out-of-print books available for the first time in many years.

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About this book

This comprehensive 1996 account of the fishing industry documents how it has changed since the beginning of the century. At that time, fishing boats landed on the beach and the fish market was actually on the seafront. On a more personal level, *Catching Stories* is a living record, told in their own words, of the individuals who made up Brighton's fishing community. Their past is remembered with humour and honesty, as are the bygone traditions and lifestyles of their families.

It was produced at a time when the style of oral history was largely a verbatim report of what was said, with a light touch of editing. While this captures the true voices of the contributors, to a contemporary reader it can appear unstructured or repetitive, but this unique and valuable document of social and oral history reveals the details of a traditional profession in an informative and unique way.

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CATCHING STORIES

Voices from the Brighton Fishing Community

1996 Foreword

This book is the result of an oral history project begun in 1993 to record the lives of those involved in the Brighton Fishing Community. It is a living record of the way in which some of the community remember their own past, and shows the traditions kept alive by the fishermen and their families. Although in no way a complete history of the community, because the number of interviews was limited, we believe this book shows the diversity of the community and records a way of life that is disappearing. This oral history project enables us to experience the past through the voices of the people involved.

It has been a long process, from the first interviews being conducted to completing this book. Once the interviews had been completed the tapes had to be transcribed. The book draws on the life stories of thirty people. Twenty-eight of these were taped interviews, with two written contributions. In order to produce the book, extracts have been taken from the transcripts of the tapes and written material. This in itself has been a daunting task with so much wonderful material to present. We selected the material on the basis of presenting a diversity of contributors and content, and we arranged the material by common themes. But these remain the words of the people interviewed, and not of the people compiling the book.

Short biographies of the contributors can be found at the back of the book along with a glossary of the words used by fishermen. The tapes and transcripts now form an archive which the public can use.

QueenSpark are proud to have produced and published this book, and believe that it is a valuable record of a community history. We hope you enjoy the book.

Brighton Fishing Community Project Team
April 1996

History

Why did the ancient settlement of Brighthelmston grow up on an inhospitable sweep of coastline open to the prevailing south-westerly gales and without a natural harbour? Was it because there used to be a small inlet at Pool Valley from which boats could be hauled up to the safety of the Steine? What's certain is that from very early times fishery was an important part of the local economy. In 1580 the fleet boasted eighty fishing boats, four hundred mariners and ten thousand nets.

There were two main types of boat. The larger ones of up to forty tons would go on 'fares' or voyages and remain at sea for weeks or months, with Brighton boats fishing not only in the English Channel but also up the east coast as far as Yarmouth and Scarborough. Then there were the inshore boats which fished locally and would be drawn up on the beach after each trip. Fishing was seasonal, following the mackerel and herring on their yearly migrations round the coast.

In the 1640s Brighton was a small town with a flourishing fishery and fishing-related trades such as boatbuilding and sail, rope and net-making. But after 1650 the industry went into a long decline, caused in part by the encroachment of the sea.

The deep banks of shingle which now seem a natural feature of Brighton beach have only appeared - as a result of the scouring action of the tides combined with the building of groynes and other sea defences - in quite modern times. Lacking this protection and vulnerable to great storms like the one which came on 11 August 1705, the chalk cliffs and foreshore were steadily eroded. By the early 1700s the fishing fleet had dwindled to about twenty-five boats.

From the 1740s and through the Regency period, as the town developed into a popular resort and regional centre, with better communications, the fishing community gradually lost its importance within the Brighton population. Even so, one hundred boats and three hundred men were involved in 1770, and the fishery continued on the beach alongside the new resort activities. Bathing machines appeared on the beach. Some of the town's fishermen and their families turned to bathing visitors for a living. By the early 1800s pleasure-boating was also well established.

From early times the fishermen had kept their boats and gear and dried their nets on the Steine. Now, these ancient customary rights were progressively removed by the Town Commissioners. The Steine was enclosed, Brighton's 'lost river' (the Wellesbourne) culverted, Pool Valley bricked over, the fishing boats removed, the cliff-top capstans dismantled. All this so that fishing activity could be confined to the beach and the Steine turned into a fashionable promenade. The fishermen's angry demonstrations were in vain.

However, the fishery remained an important and valued part of local life. By 1862 it had expanded to one hundred and fifty boats. The fishermen were still storing their gear on the beach in various 'rope houses' and huts made of half-boats, as well as in holes in the cliff. With the widening of the Kings Road in 1864-65, massive arches were built, stretching far back underground. The huts were removed. The Council granted leases of separate arches at a nominal rent to the displaced fishermen and boatmen, but fishermen believe they were effectively made to abandon their historic right to occupy and work on the foreshore, now buried beneath the Kings Road.

A Fishermen's Society was formed in 1813. The Arches were used for storing and maintaining gear but also for meetings, socials, clubs, a reading room, a school for

fishermen's children. These were associated with church missions to the fishermen run by the Bethel Chapel and St. Margaret's Church.

A fishmarket had been in operation on the beach for centuries and now a purpose-built one was constructed in the Arches opposite the bottom of Little East Street, with a hard provided in front for stalls. It became a major tourist attraction. In its heyday the old Brighton Fishmarket sold not only locally-landed fish but catches from Sussex ports like Rye and Eastbourne, as well as from further afield. Fish was sold by Dutch auction, with the price coming down rather than up.

Brighton fishermen, like those in many parts of the country, have always worked co-operatively, receiving a prearranged share of the proceeds from the catch rather than wages. A non-owning skipper could 'work the boat out', the owner keeping most of the catch proceeds until the purchase value was deemed to have been met.

After 1800, as new industries came and parts of the old town were taken over by new fashionable and commercial elites, the fishing community became more marginal and dispersed. The main fishing neighbourhoods were: to the west and north of West Street; a notoriously insanitary area known as Pimlico which was situated immediately to the north of Church Street and demolished under the Corporation's first slum-clearance scheme in the 1870s; the area between Edward Street and Sussex Street, famous for its herring dees; and the area around Bedford Street.

The seasonal rhythm of fishing continued very much as it always had until the 1930s. Fishermen would start the year trawling about March and then they would switch to the fixed trammel nets until the end of April, when the boats were fitted out for mackerel-drifting which would go on into July. In the summer there was seine-net fishing for mackerel along the beach and some boats would be pleasure-tripping or lobster-potting. From August they would start trawling for soles and plaice up to about November, after which it would be herring-drifting until two or three weeks before Christmas. In the 1950s, full-time fishermen were still launching from the beach and 'heaving up' after each trip, as they had been since time immemorial, and still using traditionally-designed boats such as the twenty-six foot 'Brighton punts' and the elliptic-stern beach boats.

In 1940 the beach was mined; many boats were laid up and some Brighton fishermen took their small craft across the Channel to help in the evacuation of Allied servicemen. Many fishermen went into minesweepers, said to be the Navy's most dangerous job. Fishing continued out of Rye or Newhaven, but only between dawn and dusk.

During the War the fishsalesmen were given space in the Circus Street wholesale fruit and vegetable market, opened by the Council in 1938. After the War they moved back to the old market on the beach but in 1960 it was condemned as unhygienic and again removed to Circus Street, this time into purpose-built premises. Another customary right had been lost.

The new market was not a success and Brighton had lost its importance as a fish-marketing centre. Today there are half a dozen different local wholesale markets: Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales, Portslade; Monteum, in Brighton Road, Shoreham; Jelfish, off Trafalgar Street, Brighton; and Peter Gandey, West Quay, Newhaven.

As for the retail trade, as well as fish shops and of course fish and chip shops, a lot of fishing people sold their fish from barrows, carts and lorries, sometimes travelling considerable distances. The Brighton Open Market began in Oxford Street in 1919 as an unofficial collection of barrows mostly owned by ex-servicemen. It was soon moved to the central rose-walk of the Level, but a permanent site was opened in Marshalls Row on 19 November 1926, with stalls on either side. The cottages of Marshalls Row were demolished in 1938 and the present permanent market, with forty-two stalls arranged in a 'figure of eight', was opened in 1960.

Many Brighton fishermen used to keep their boats for at least part of the year at Shoreham or Newhaven where boats could put to sea in weather which would have made a beach launch impossible. However, transport was difficult until after World War Two, when more fishermen began to acquire their own vehicles and it was easier to fish out of the nearby ports. Today there are no boats fishing full-time from the beach.

When the Brighton Marina was being planned in the 1970s local fishermen were promised every facility, only to see the promises progressively abandoned. However, they did obtain secure berths in the outer harbour and the small fleet is now able to put to sea at any state of the tide with quick access to good fishing grounds.

Engines took over progressively from sails from around the time of World War One. Since World War Two, with improved radio communications, modern navigation systems, hydraulic net haulers etc., fishing has become (comparatively!) less arduous. At the same time, despite campaigns by the fishermen and ever more complicated government and European Union regulations on catch quotas and net sizes, stocks everywhere have been very seriously depleted by persistent overfishing. The number of smaller boats that still go netting in traditional ways is dwindling, the old seasonal fishing patterns are no more and most fishing is now done by trawlers, which fish all round the coast. Inshore fishing has become an even more difficult livelihood.

In May 1994, the Brighton Fishing Museum opened at No. 201 Kings Road Arches. Traditional fishing boats are again to be seen on the beach and fishermen continue to use the adjacent arches to store and work on their gear. At No. 207 a fishing family has opened a shop selling freshly-landed fish. The history of the Brighton fishery goes on.

March 1996

Catching Stories

It was called beach fever

I was born in Ship Street and my playground was the beach and I used to be down there after school and before school. And at one time I kept a note of which boats were on the beach, which motorboats, and that was when I was just in senior school, so that would have been eleven, so my interest was there. I used to go angling on the groyne, and on the Pier, when I was a little kid. And I was always on the beach, you know, there was a lot going on in the fifties, then, pleasure-boating and, well a certain amount of fishing although most of it was done from the harbours then. And it was my playground, you could cross the road then when you were ten, anyway, if not before. It was basically interest and something to do. There's an old saying, it was called 'beach fever'. Several lads were affected by it. Your holiday you spent on the beach, every evening you were down on the beach.

Alan Hayes

My great-grandmother, she lived till she was a hundred and six, she was interviewed on her hundredth birthday. She packed up the beach when she was eighty, and that was in the days with the old wooden seats, before deck chairs came into being. She had the sole rights of putting the chairs out. My father as a boy, he used to go down and help her before he went to school. And on the way home, bring 'em up at the high water mark when all the visitors had gone back.

Jim Sinden

I used to get 'em all up in the morning in the summer and we were on the beach at nine o'clock. You had to get yourself a pew on the beach because it used to get so full, and we used to stay down there all day, keep 'em down there all day, while he [Ted] was in bed, in the summer.

Barbara Gillam

Oh yeah, it's great being down the beach because the amount of kids that walk past and all the old people and me dad can be standing there mending a net and I think, 'That's my dad,' it makes me feel proud. And the amount of people that take his photo.

It was my great, great-granddad, I'm not sure how many greats it was, but it was on my gran's side, he said that there was a tunnel that went from the beach up to the Race Hill, to the actual race hill and he got arrested there for smuggling. And he [dad] went looking for the start of the tunnel and apparently, that was when he was small, and they found a tunnel but it had all caved in. It must have been about my fourth great-granddad, his name was Allen. So we've got smugglers in the family! What I want to know is how they got all the tunnels dug because it was in chalk. They wasn't called

the Police, we called them 'the gobbies', they were the Customs men. They were probably smuggling alcohol and silks, that must be over a hundred years ago, actually it might be nearer two hundred.

Linda Gillam

My family weren't really fishermen other than before the War, we used to own bathing machines. In the Wartime a lot of the bathing machines were taken away and destroyed when they done the sea defences at Brighton, with a lot of the boats.

Dave May

There was a mast there, and if there was a red flag there, that was for no sailing, and no swimming, people weren't supposed to go swimming when that was up. It was a danger flag, and you used to swim at your own risk. Good swimmers would be alright. We used to go in the water, six-foot waves and dive straight at them, you know, but people that visited didn't know anything about it because of different times of the tide. If the tide came up high then it would drop down sharp where the water met it and if it was a bit rough, drag you in it and the beach went down like that until it got to whatever position the tide was in, if it was going out, or coming in. Some of them people, they used to go down not realising there was this sloping bit, they used to get into trouble.

My old man dragged plenty out of the sea. If Bob Collins wanted him, they had a little black punt, and it was a wide berth punt, and he would stand offshore in this punt, with a pair of oars and that, and keep an eye on the bathers, and if anyone got into trouble, he'd be there in the boat, to bring them ashore. And that's what Bob Collins supplied because he had bathing machines, he had about fifteen or more bathing machines, and they used to go up the steps to the bathing machines on one side, on the town side. They used them if they wanted to go swimming. They used to go there and undress, leave their clobber in there and come down the steps on the sea side. There was a coconut mat, rolls of coconut matting, and that used to roll from the bottom of the steps to the water's edge, so as, people walking on these pebbles, it would make it easier for them. The times I had to go and yank that out of the water, you know where they forgot about it and it got yanked into the sea, there was a hell of a lot of that, and my old man, he used to do the punt, and he used to watch these people, plenty of times he had to go over the side himself to get people who've been in trouble.

And then someone'd come up to him and say they'd gone in the sea, and it's the easiest thing to do, I've got false teeth myself, and open your mouth, and your teeth came out, and you'd lose your teeth in the water. Well, if the tide was about right, they used to say to the old man, 'I've lost my teeth.' He used to say, 'Well, come back later,' because the tide would recede, and he'd look about on the stones and sand, and he'd find them.

James Ward

Dive like a cork, and swim like a brick. None of the fishermen could swim. Let's say about seventy percent, I should think, couldn't swim. The youngsters who had come into the game, they could swim. Yet they used to go in all weathers. They were never worried.

Ted Watherington

We used to fish off the beach, yes. Some of the boats still come off right down here at Bedford Street, we used to heave up. My grandfather had four or five boats there. I'd love to know where all this beach comes from. Because there must have been thousands of tons of beach have come here. Because the railway was taken out, years ago. And before that was taken out we used to have to heave our boats up over the railway and put 'em in under the front there, because the sea used to come up there. There was never all that beach, no. Because that front's been taken out about nearly twenty yards, I expect.

And then as I've told you, two years afterwards they took the front all out further, and the beach is still growing. Where it's coming from I don't know. You're getting more and more beach there. There must be hundreds of thousands of ton of beach come there. I don't know where it comes from. I'd like to know where it comes from. It's grown so much it's amazing. Do you know where the Banjo Groyne is? Well, on the east side of that, you used to have to go down steps to get to the beach. Under the Volk's Railway there was steps went down. And the water used to come right up there. And up on the east end of that, onto the other groyne there, there was just about as long [high] as this [a yard or so], high tide. People used to sit there and have something to eat if it was calm. That was always called the Lido because they used to have floodlight bathing there. And I bet if anybody dug down on them piles what the railway runs on, they'd find floodlights on there, the old floodlights, what they used to have for floodlight bathing.

'Big Ted' Gillam

You go to Brighton beach now, there's not one full-time boat being worked off the beach. As a kid when I first started to go boating I can remember up to about twenty-nine boats working off there. There was two or three M.T.B.s [Motor Torpedo Boats] moored, a boat called the Pendennis Castle, a boat called the Regency Belle and of course the Campbell's paddle-steamers that were running from the Pier. Most of the families in Brighton had two boats.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

In the summer months we used to go tripping. Some fishermen never did tripping, all they did was fishing, is the summer. But if they didn't do tripping, they did fishing all summer. But they didn't do night fishing, they did day fishing. Mind you, you can catch more fish in the dark than you can in the daylight, same as you catch fish in so much

depth of water, and you know that you've got to be in that depth of water to get the fish that you know is out there.

Dick Taylor

After the mackerel finished you'd do a little bit of boating on the beach, you know, taking passengers out. You just pushed the bow into the beach, keep your engine going, and you had a ladder on the side, with steps up, they got aboard, and one of them had to stand up and help 'em down into the boat. Soon as you got your twelve in, you'd back off, reverse the engine, take 'em for a trip round the Pier or wherever you want to go, back ashore, unload 'em. We had to polish the boat up a bit, like. One time we had one child over and they had me up, stopped for a week. Oh yes, you had a beach inspector used to come along, have his glasses on you, see how you was carrying 'em. I was never fined, a lot of us got away with it. But I didn't like the game and I used to pack up very quick. Taking people round the Pier and that. But I couldn't get on with it and I used to soon pack it up and go back to the old fishing. I don't know, it seemed begging to me. But honestly I used to hate it, really. I couldn't get on with boating at all. But you had to go, to make ends meet. I didn't like the job itself, all this shouting about for people to come to your boat, like, it was all like that. You used to mess your propellers up, going boating, but that was just one of the things.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Summertime was a very bad time for all the local fishermen, their livelihoods weren't so good as they are today, but when I say poor I don't mean in terms of money, but we didn't enjoy it. We made the most of it. We called it the begging season, because we weren't really into it, we were fishermen, but we were glad enough to try and eke out our livelihood by turning to the pleasure-boat. Pleasure-boating, very poor pleasure-boating. When I say poor pleasure-boating I don't mean in terms of money, but we didn't enjoy it. We made the most of it.

Jimmy Howell

Then in the summer, when there wasn't so much fish about, we used to go pleasure-boating. It was on the fishing boats. We used to clean 'em up and fit 'em out for pleasure-boating. My first job then on the beach was on the Skylark (SM 5) and my job was to help put the steps down, and the plank for the people to walk up, and to help them in the boat. I used to stand on the fore-end of the boat and help them into their seats. Now for the quantity of people on my first boat the Skylark, we weren't allowed more than twelve people. And of course they had to be supplied with lifebelts, which we had to have on board because they were an essential thing.

Len Trussell

Then there were much larger boats which were used for pleasure, taking people out for trips. These two boats were much larger than the others. Their names were Popgun and the Fair Irene. Popgun was named after a race-horse he [Bob Leach] owned and Fair Irene was one of his daughters. These two boats were registered under the Board of Trade which meant they had to be inspected by a Board of Trade official before they could take people out for trips, which meant everything had to be ready laid out for the inspector to see: lifebelts (39), life-raft (1), lifebuoys (2), fire extinguishers (4), water pumps (3). I used to help with the pleasure-boats weekends.

Edward Pierce

We had summers then, didn't we? Nearly every day we went boating. We had to go boating, yeah, to make ends meet. Brighton was loaded with people. One go in a row boat: six pence. But you charged two bob if you were aboard a Tradeboat. You was only s'posed to carry twelve but this Board of Trade boat I had, she carried twenty-eight. If you got a pound a day, you was lucky. Then you'd go up the beer shop and spend it!

'Cow Heel' Andrew

On nice calm summer afternoons the men would get the boats ready for pleasure trips. They would give the decks a good clean and put plenty of seating aboard. The men would stand at the water's edge and call out, 'Any more for the Skylark.' The people sitting on the beach would then come down, bringing their children with them, get onto the platform that was put down for them and the men would help them aboard. They would get the motor going and take them out to sea, from Pier to Pier and back which in those days would cost them one shilling, half price for children.

Dorothy Pierce

We used to do midnight boating down the beach. We used to leave home seven o'clock and very likely we wouldn't get home before twelve o'clock the next morning. Working all the time taking passengers out. It was a heyday for fishermen that was, just after the War. Holiday-makers - they used to come down from London. They used to queue to go back up to London of a night-time, and at eight o'clock we used to go out and get the people who had drink in them to go pleasure-tripping. It used to be two shillings, in them days - that's 10p for a twenty minute trip.

Johnny Humphrey

Oh yeah, nice people, but they was a little silly, like. They didn't mind getting wet. They used to enjoy themselves. The adults used to come down Mondays during the summer season, used to call it Mum's Day, Mother's Day, and that, because all the mums used to come down. They used to come down in these charabancs, you know, coaches. They came from all over the country, London, all over, you name it - a day's outing to Brighton. And they used to come down, and wander around the town, and come down

the beach, and go up to the pubs and that, have two or three drinks up the pubs, and do a knees-up on the beach, they'd dance all round the beach. And they'd have a trip out in the boat. They was always in a good mood, you could always talk them into a ride in the boat. Used to have some saucy sailors, mind, 'If you're going to be sick, make sure you fall out the boat and get sick over the side,' or something like that. But they used to enjoy themselves.

Course, the kids, they always wanted to go in the boat. Used to get mothers and fathers to come down to us and say, 'Here's our three kids, let them stop with you a couple hours,' and pay you. So they can go up and have a drink, and be on their own, like. We used to have people come down when it was Brighton racing, with their kids, if it was a fine day, and they pushed their kids down to us, 'Let them stop with you all day, we're going up Brighton races.'

Ted Watherington

They'd stand on the beach, and they'd say, 'Anybody going out?' Then they'd go down the beach, they'd go in between the two Piers, for a shilling a time, and some of the boats - the little boats, the row boats - even they done it, they would hold about eight, four each side, one man on his own, one pair of oars and he'd take them out, row them round and bring them back. And then there were some of them, with bigger boats, could take about sixteen, which worked by motor. Some of them went by sail, but not many. The old Skylark, that went by sail, they had to have about four pairs of oars so if it became becalmed, they had to row it. They always had the oars set if it was a bit choppy, and that, and they were launching it into the sea with about fifty people in it. A shilling a time.

There'd be four or more on the beach who'd like to help, but there were four of them who were there to do the job of hooking the boat up, pulling it in and turning it round and that. And when the day was over, one man was responsible for all the money they took on the boat, and that was usually my granddad, because he was the captain.

This was for pleasuring, and he would take all the money, they'd go up the boozier, tip all the money on the counter, Bob Collins would take his cut out of it because it was his boat and that, and the rest of it was divided up amongst those that worked. My old man started getting drunk, the silly old bugger, so it depended how many people you took out if it was good pay or not. Of course, they used to stand on the beach, 'Any more going?' That's what the tourists came down for, of course. A lot of them were sick, but it was a good life, it was hard, but it was good.

On fine days when weather suited the trippers, they had to go out because there was a beach inspector and he would say if there would be any sailing that day or not, and if there was no sailing there was a red flag stuck up on the promenade.

James Ward

In the sixties there was Major Hill who used to have the tripping boats in Brighton, he sold out and they was bought by a fella in Scotland, and I used to run the Alexander, there was a boat called the Montgomery and the Alexander. I ran that for four years up to 1966, from about '61 to '66, I worked for this chap who bought the business from Major Hill who used to have the two tripping boats. They were named after Montgomery and Alexander [WW2 generals] after the War because that was the in name I suppose, these days they'd find something a bit more sensible. I went with him up to about '66 and it started to decline even then, the passenger carrying, I think that was about the last Board of Trade boat to work. One year after that I believe a bloke named Mike O'Brien, who used to play for the Brighton Tigers [ice hockey team] actually, he had one year but he didn't do a lot of tripping and that was more or less the last of it and I think since then there might have been a couple of boats tried; a boat called the Peace & Plenty went, I think they had a season. But there were only twelve boats under the Council but the boats we were in were all Board of Trade boats, or D.T.I. as it is now.

So we continued with that up to '66 and with the decline of that, we had the Edward and Mary, and I bought another boat called the Gannet and we used to do a bit of trammelling and a bit of netting, but mainly we started to take out fishing parties and that was from Shoreham. And then, it would have been sixteen years this year [1994] we came to Brighton Marina. I think we were about the first boats to come in here and we went back to doing mainly angling and fishing, but the tripping boats, there's no boats working from the beach at all now. It's all finished.

There was one family, the Mitchells, that used to more or less purely do tripping as a livelihood. Old Bill Mitchell, he's dead as well, they had about three boats out, the Doris, the Jeanette and a boat called the Kathleen. They used to do a little bit of fishing in the winter but they were mainly trippers.

Dave May

You earnt more, but in respect of the amount of fish you was catching at that time money was sort of scarce, like, it meant a lot, it was really a lot of money, like. The trips, working on pleasure trips and that, used to charge, the adult fare was two shillings which was ten pence, the children's fare was five pence which was a shilling in those days. And we used to be going out, take the trips out for about a half hour, twenty minutes - half hour - that was running backwards and forwards from the beach, out on your trip and coming back.

Jim [Doris's cousin] had a fish round and he used to do his fish round during the day and that, he did his fish round in the morning and he'd come down in the afternoon and join the pleasure trips and that to make up the crew for the afternoon. Other than that we used to have a beach crew, which was touters working on the steps, you used to have your steps and your plank, and they used to be touting on the beach for customers. All in all, well, it used to vary sometimes, you'd be four, always two in each

boat, the skipper and his mate, always two in each boat, and then used to have two on the beach. So if we were working two boats, we'd have six. You had to have the skipper and his mate in the boat - that was the regulations. The two on the beach were just there to get the passengers off, and reload and you know, tout for the customers, and when the boat was out, they used to pop up to the pub sometimes.

Ted Watherington

You didn't get much of a living at boating, it was just an easy shilling to tide you through the summer, and also most of them went lobster-potting as well, or done a little bit of fishing. Other fishing was always slack in the summer, for our type of boats.

It was just less and less people came to Brighton. I think everybody then was starting to go on aeroplanes. A little ride out in a little boat wasn't the same. They'd just been to Spain on a big aeroplane, you went to a fairground you had a whizz round at a hundred mile an hour, and a jog around in a little boat at say five miles an hour didn't seem very much.

We took Margaret Thatcher out, the Prime Minister, although she was Leader of the Opposition at the time. I took her out in 1975. I advised her not to go because it was a little bit choppy. It was arranged that she came down to visit our club and we wanted obviously to get our spoke in about the Common Market, the fishing side, not because of the boating, because of the limits. We took her out. I advised against going this day because we wouldn't have took ordinary passengers out, it was a little bit just on the borderline. And she was very insistent, to go, to be seen to be in a boat, as her predecessor Ted Heath, Edward Heath, used to be a sailor. And I went and got the boat, we was at anchor, anchored off, and I went and got the boat, and it just seemed to lay calm for a little bit, or smooth, so I shouted to her, 'Come on,' I don't think I actually said, 'Cock your leg up and get in here,' but, 'Come on, jump in here if you want to go,' a bit quick. And we took her out for an half hour's spin round the Piers, she got wringing wet, the photographers obviously all wanted a picture of her being wringing wet.

Alan Hayes

So he said [a passenger who wanted to be taken out on the boat], 'I'll make it worth your while.' 'What d'you want then?' 'Couple of handfuls of mussels.' My mate wouldn't take him, wouldn't even get that. I had to put the engine out. Grab two handfuls of mussels. Gets his penknife out, opens it up. I looked at him. He said, 'What you looking at?' I said, 'I'm looking at you. I'd like to know what your profession is, sir.' He said, 'What d'you mean?' I said, 'Well, you got me baffled, that's all.' Guess what he was? Harley Street specialist! So, I never suffered with me throat, my brother did. He had quinsy [throat problem]. He wouldn't touch 'em [mussels]. I said, 'Look. I had a Harley Street specialist in that boat yesterday and he told me what they were good for.' You mustn't have 'em when they're open. They gotta be like that, live all shut up. 'Cos there's a sewer pipe halfway along that pier. That's why I had to run up to that silver buoy, come

up inside see. He wouldn't touch 'em. Not a bit of it. No way. He's one of the nicest fellas that walked in a pair of shoes - he'd help anybody out at all, he did.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

Years ago when we had the tripping boats we used to run the courtesy boats for the ships, Alan Hayes will bear me out with this, it was one for the local Council. It was a big cocktail party they used to have in the last week to keep the Councillors happy. It was Lord Cohen, as he was in the end, and quite a few of those local Councillors that are still perhaps alive now. We were running in on the last trip and as we got nearer, about two miles off the beach, Alan said to me, 'Look there's a dinghy over there broken away from its mooring or been pushed off the beach.' So we went over to pick it up and as we went alongside this thing there was a chap and his young lady friend laying in the bottom of it. They jumped up, rather an awkward position. You can imagine this caused quite a scream amongst all these dignitaries we had aboard the boat.

Dave May

One day when we were ready to push the boats down the beach to start pleasuring, my father put a one-pound block of tallow in my hand and said, 'Here you are, that is your job to keep the trows greased, you are the tallow boy.' I was very chuffed to be so! The trows, as they were called, were a piece of oak wood about five feet long, four inches thick, with a piece cut out each end. One piece cut out at each end. One piece was called the saddle which used to take the keel and the other to take the bilge. These are what I had to keep well greased to make the boat easier to push up and down the beach.

My other jobs were to put the flags up and take them down and stow them away with the lifebelts, lifebuoys and fire extinguishers in the forward locker and make sure it was locked.

Edward Pierce

I used to get about a shilling a day. I was what they called a 'Toller Boy'. As you know, a boat's got a keel and two bilges. And the bilges have got runners on it, because that's the shape. One on each side. When the boat used to come in there was about six-foot planks with holes in the end, a rope going into it, so as it could be pulled in and out and pulled up the beach. And that was about twelve inches thick and when the boat hit the shore he put the end of it under the front keel. The front keel that was - and then the rest of it, because the boat would always lean over - the rest of it would come out and as the boat came up a few feet so the side keel would catch up the other end of the trow and I used to have to grease the trows, so the boat was straight. And when it used to get a certain distance, they used to put it on a turntable and turn it round on itself, turn it round on the turntable, so it'd be ready for launching, going back into the sea. They never used to launch it backwards, because it was all hard work with the waves coming,

they wouldn't have the bow of the boat facing the sea, if you follow me. I used to have to pull all these trows out, some six-foot ones. And then, if there was only the bilge wanted picking up, there was three-foot ones. They had a scooped out part in it so as the bilge run in it and I used to have to grease that, you could buy tallow in blocks. I used to have them in a bucket, and they used to shout, 'Toller, Jimmy!' and I used to dash over to where this trow was and put some toller on it before the keel got onto it. It was like dripping.

That went on the trow, and the keel would slip onto that. The trow was a piece of wood that went under what the boat was pulled up on. They never used to pull them up on the stones, they used to pull them up on these trows, as they called them. That was my job. Toller boy, I was.

James Ward

There were certain times of the year that they would try to work from the beach and they used to trip the boats off. They would have what was known as the 'olly off' road, which they used to stand by on that and somebody on the beach would say, 'Let go,' and they would trip them like a lifeboat. They [father and grandfather] used to get trows under the boat, with the seas coming in, they used to put them under and another would push down and when it got so far down they would wait for rather a bit of smooth coming in and perhaps my father and grandfather and I would let go and they used to trip the channel and away went the boat launched off and they used to pull away on the 'olly off' road.

Jimmy Howell

When they used to fish off Brighton, they could get the boats up to the top of the beach with what they called the capstan. It was usually manned by two fishermen with big strong ropes attached to the boat and brought up the beach, then put on the capstan, and the men went round and round and there was usually two men putting slip boards under the boat to glide it up the beach. It was rather interesting to watch this going on. There was a large space of concrete flooring opposite the Arches where they kept their nets and all their apparatus that went with a fishing trawler.

Dorothy Pierce

We used to have, as I say, a capstan with two bars in it. Like the bolt of the capstan was about as big round as that [arm span] and about eight foot high, and you had a hole through [at right angles] and a hole through down below it, so you had two bars, about seventeen or eighteen foot or twenty foot. And a couple of you got on each one and kept going round and round, on this capstan and pulled the boats up over the beach.

We never had a motorised capstan because, when they took the front out, our capstan what we had, with the bars, we couldn't use it because the railway was taken out and it would be high water mark, so they give us a handwinch, the Council did.

'Big Ted' Gillam

And in those days we had to help push the boats down, and some of them were twenty or thirty foot long and very, very heavy. It took nine or ten of us to get the boat down the beach, which was took down on what we called squats, and on trows and that was the way they came up the beach. And there was no electric winches in those days, and we had to pull 'em all up by the capstans. Or we had to pull them up on a rope which we called a painter, that's spelt the same way as when you paint something.

Len Trussell

It's like a long tall barrel with a heavy frame, and the frame's fixed to the beach. And a two-inch cable and a hook on it which went on the boat and the other end went round the capstan about three times. And then old Bob Collins - he used to sit behind that and he used to have a rail going across and put his feet on the rail end and - as the horse took the whatsit round, so it was drawing the cable through, see, three turns and the rest of it was going down to the boat and coming up from the boat. That's how they used to get it in, and if the horse wasn't available, us kids or anyone, they'd shove the pole in, which was about four or five yards long. It was a big thing, because they used to put the horse's harness stuff onto the end of the pole, the harness, and then they'd go round the beach, and kicking stones all over the show, it had to use a bit of Middle Street, you know, to do it, and that was Pierness's horse. Pierness was the timber people in Middle Street, and he'd been picking up timber and all that in Stanmer Park. He'd cut the trees down, and at the weekend, poor bugger, he had no rest. Saturdays and Sundays he was always down the beach, pulling up the boat. Only Collins's boat, but that was how they used to do it, and if the horse wasn't there, the pole would go in and as many people as you could get volunteering to push it. And it was bloody hard work! Pebbles all the time. That was great fun.

James Ward

And they had the old wooden fraps, the old ones. Well there's still one down there now on the Fishmarket. See, but after the War - in the Sixties I think it was - they took them all away and they put an electric winch down there afterwards. Ah, this [winch box] was a big one, they used to have a big electric winch in it.

Oh, we only used to have the hand-grabs for [seining] small one with the handle each side, 'cos they weren't heavy boats, see.

Bobby Andrew

When we used to come ashore, where the fisherman's Arches are - that used to be a recreation room. We used to get in there, say twenty of us, and have a game of cards, and talk about different things that had happened while you'd been on a trip anywhere, or a decent catch what you've had, or any hard times that you've had. As I say, it's a hard life, but it's enjoyable. I don't actually regret doing it, but if I had my time again, I would never do it again.

Johnny Humphrey

Well, originally those Arches were just holes in the cliff; and with their old boats, half boats up against the wall - you've probably seen photographs of them - they had what they call 'rope houses' on the beach where they stored their nets. The Council offered to build these Arches at a peppercorn rent, forever, if they'd take the rope houses off the beach because Brighton was so popular as a holiday resort. Which they did, but now they've driven them from the beach, from the Arches, and I don't know if you saw Ted at the old Net Arch, but that was given by the Countess of Huntingdon for free. But now the Corporation want to charge thousands of pounds a year for them.

Joe Mitchell

They used to cut them in half [boats] and they made like a shed, so they could put their gear in, because they never had the Arches, that's how they came to get the Arches at the bottom of the steps. They're not s'posed to be sold [or leased] for private, they're for the fishermen see, but they ain't got no papers to prove it. They're being sold privately, four hundred pounds or five hundred pounds a year. I let my mate have mine. It was no good to me.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

He [his friend] felt the fishermen of Brighton lost their rights when they agreed to come out of what was their rope sheds on the beach as was the same as Hastings, and went into the arches which were at that time caves, going back that far, and then they built the tarmac road in between as you see there now, because it was all cliff face there at one time but then they built it up as you see it today, the King's Road, and once they were no longer coming over the beach stones and he reckons that although there are beach stones under that tarmac and also under the floorboards in the Arches, he felt that the fishermen lost their rights because they no longer had to come over the beach stones.

Jimmy Howell

Well, he's only got an eight-foot by eight-foot arch, it works out about two hundred pounds a year, very, very small. He had one at the bottom of the steps, a lovely arch, but they outpriced him - it went right back under the road, it was lovely.

They always had their money right on the day it was due, it was never overdue or anything, I used to go and pay it right on the dot. And they outpriced him - that's been empty for nearly three years now and they've smashed the door in. Then young Ted took another arch further along and so Ted moved into that. Well, then young Ted got a garage, he couldn't afford to pay for the garage and the arch, so that had to go. So I got on to the Estate Office and I said, 'Look it's not on,' I said, 'it's been his life down there.' You wouldn't believe it, but he's been one of the biggest tourist attractions in Brighton. He's had photographs taken from all over the world, they say, 'Do you mind if I just take your photograph.'

Barbara Gillam

Yes, well, I think myself they're talking out of their top hats, because they say it's a seafront improvement - the Corporation caused the local fishermen to move off the beach. They put the prices of the Arches up - where they store their gear - they put them up tremendous. You take now; the smallest arch runs out at two hundred pounds a year rent, plus about seventy pounds rates. When you take that you've got to find another three hundred on top of what you live on at home - it's a big pile of your money. They stuck the prices up and now half of the Arches down the beach are empty.

Johnny Humphrey

We've had an arch on the beach now for about thirty years. I was in partnership with a chap named George Wheeler, he was one of the old life-guards, and we've had this arch for thirty years and we were literally, in the end, priced out of it. You'll find now that there's only about half a dozen fishermen really own property or arches on the beach. Now they're going to open a fishermen's museum which I think is a bloody good idea but really they're going to pay out fortunes to put something there that was originally there for nothing. They're going to be paid to stand there playing with a bit of net where they was purely doing it as a livelihood. There was a great character there named Jimmy Allett who used to stand there all day, he used to make these net bags for people to take their shopping home in. He used to get a queue of people there and he'd stand there yarning to them and making these net bags. There was two or three of them doing that. All the fishermen used to be there working, just doing their job. For the holiday-makers it was a great entertainment.

Dave May

I was told by the old fishermen who I was always with when I was little, that the Steine Gardens, where the bronze fountain is there now, that belonged to the fishermen years ago and they used to dry their nets on there. Because you've got to realise that the sea used to come well up and there was nowhere else for them to dry on the beach. There was so many boats on the beach at that particular time, there were about seventy or eighty boats down near the Fishmarket and through that way, so they used to dry them on there.

It's said that they sold all that lot for a dinner one night to the Corporation with the proviso that they hung the nets over the rails along the seafront and dried them that way to get the air up through them. And that's why the fishermen now can hang their nets anywhere along the seafront and also they are allowed to tan their nets on the beach, but I think, they might be governed down to so many days a week.

Steve Ovet

With the Museum opening up they've tried to promote fishing, which has helped us, in a roundabout way, because you get more interest from people. Whereas before we were the down and outs, and now people are seeing the other side of it as the Museum and places like that, it's given people an insight into it, I think.

John Gillam

All cut out by hand

In Brighton there was one boat builder, his name was Twaits. At Shoreham there was several. Sutters was one of them, and Courtney & Bunkett, I think. There was a couple at Eastbourne, in them days, Sisk, and Pragnell. Matter of fact, Sisk was one of the best, the prettiest boat builders, and he did lovely work, he used to build lovely boats, but ours was more rugged and stronger, much stronger. And we did really build some good boats.

The boats we built at Cantells were mostly clinker boats. We built beach boats. Clinker is a lapped-plank boat where one plank laps over the other, the carvel, they're all on edge, she's smooth outside. Clinker is like a dinghy. You see, practically all the beach boats was clinker, because it gives them a lift, they get a lift under the edge of the planks. We did build several carvel, but those were only special orders.

Bob Holden

Dick Lower was a terrific boat builder. He used to work for Cantells. Cantells' yard was just down from where that pub is in Newhaven, the Ark I think it's called. The yard isn't there now. Then Dick Lower thought he'd do better on his own so he started up, and his two boys went in with him, Charlie and Bob. Their yard was round on the canal at the back of Denton Island.

Ted Watherington

There used to be two local boat builders, Johnny Plugh, he was the local one down here. 'Cos I can remember him building a boat called the Gracie Fields in one of the arches down on the seafront and then they couldn't get it out and had to knock half the doorway down to get it out.

Bobby Andrew

Cantells was the only firm in Newhaven. We never had any competition. I was five years apprentice there. I was born in Newhaven twenty-ninth of the eleventh, '06, I went to school in Newhaven, I'm a Newhaven boy bred and born. I started with Cantells at four shillings a week in 1921 and the last year I finished up at a pound a week, then I done another year for thirty shillings a week. And then I came onto tradesman's pay. Your wages was worked out. Four shillings first year, six shillings, eight shillings, ten, twelve and six I think it was, something like that, fifteen. I stayed with Mr Cantell for nineteen years.

The others that worked there, they wasn't regular. They'd probably be there eighteen months, then they'd be away for six months. We got busy and well, then they'd come back again, if Cantells had a job like. We used to carry two apprentices, when one 'prentice left he'd take another one on. When I went there the 'prentice I followed on, he'd been there eighteen months or so I suppose, but me and him, of all the 'prentices followed on behind us, we was the only two that stayed there. His name was Ted Gillam. He had nothing to do with the other Gillams. He only lived a few doors away from me. When I left, Ted was still there, and he worked with them all through the war, and I left Christmas '39.

Bob Holden

The Sussex Maid was built in Shoreham, she was built for old Trikell Carr. I went in her. He had that boat of Danny Ruff's what was on the beach, the Ellen Maud. He lived in Mighell Street. Bobby Leach had the Sussex Maid built. Courtney & Bunkett built her, which built the Kentish Maid and the other two or three luggers.

'Rachel' Leach

My family's boats? Well, the small boats which were used to come up the beach, what we call the beach boats, were mostly built by Philips at Rye, at The Strand, Rye. Over the years naturally he got older and older and older and his son took over. Some of the boats were built by Lower at Newhaven, but you can see the difference in the boats. I liked, we liked, the way that Philips built a boat, because the planking was clinker-built.

But the bigger boats, over twenty-six foot long, were built in bigger yards. The yards where we had ours built were in Scotland. We liked the boats that were built in Scotland, also the larch and pine timber which was used, and the oak keels, was cheaper in Scotland because it didn't have to be hauled. There was quite a number of boats we had built at Hopeman, north of Aberdeen. And also we had boats built in Ireland, north of Belfast, which is Portavogie.

John Leach

Mr Cantell's son, who worked with us, once or twice I've seen him draw in the shape of a 'liptic stern boat, like the Challenger or the Alert or the beach boats. I've seen him drawing that all out with chalk on the floor, but that used to worry the old man. Oh, he couldn't stick that, that used to make him mad to see him drawing that out. It was so simple to him to build the boat what was wanted, it was so simple to him. The old boy had the boat in his head, yes. He worked with us. He used to go up to pick out an elm tree up in the country that he wanted cut up into boards. They'd be all the shape of the tree. And when we got the boards, directly as we got them, we put 'em in racks in our workshop.

When we were making a beach boat, we used to have what we call crooks for sawing the floors out. The fishing boats come flat in the bottom, for beaching; if you had a deep-keeled boat she'd fall over on the beach. You had to put ground floors all the way through the boat, and that was all cut out by hand, that was two and a half by two and a half oak. We used to get these crooks, a piece of oak that'd be shaped so you could get these floors out of it, then we used to have some sharper crooks for when you get up in the bow and the stern, and when you got aft you had to do them in two pieces and a joint between them.

You'd have long thin board to mark out the plank as it's going to be. You'd first wrap a very thin board, about a quarter of an inch thick and you'd just bend that round, but it all depends how you bent that round, how your boat was going to be built, because if you wanted it to come out a bit you'd have to lay it out a bit, and then you'd mark with chalk round the edge, where you're going to go.

One of the first things you had to do when we started was the planing and the sawing. You'd have to saw these planks out, and when you sawed the first plank out, you'd put it on the board again, cut another one out for it, one for one side, one for the other. But you always had to be sure that you marked on the end where it was to go. You'd have to put 'farrard' on it, or 'inside', whatever it was, 'inside' or 'out', you had to mark 'em so you knew which way they went.

Dinghies you could do in one plank, but bigger boats you'd have to scarf it, a three-inch scarf, you just scarf 'em together, because as you come up round the boat so the planks take a sheer in 'em. When you first get up to the bilge of the boat, the planks would take a shape reverse to the sheer. Then when you got up to the bilge the plank would turn out like an 'S' sort of shape. But above that it'd come the other way, you'd get the sheer of the boat.

In a clinker-built boat like we used to build, scarves in planks had to be right distances apart. You see, if you've got a plank with a scarf in, the next scarf you put must be three foot away from that scarf. And then you'd have to have two planks above the first scarf before you could put another one above that.

Bob Holden

The Ovetts, they were a fishing family who lived in Frederick Gardens and Frederick Street, are reputed to have come over with what is known as the hog-boats. Now my uncle Bill, who was a Marchant, and his children even up till recently were known as 'Oggies', and I used to think to myself, what a horrible name to have. But it worked out the fact that they were hog-boat fishermen, my uncle Bill. With the Prince Regent here in the French Revolution, they had to find a boat that would land on these Brighton beaches because the French aristocracy wanted to come to Brighton, because of the Prince Regent and the Pavilion. They found the most suitable boats were the pig-boats, which were in the canals of France for the transport of pigs. And when they came over they came ashore in the surf so well on the Brighton beach, the Brighton fishermen adopted them. And the fishermen in them were known as Oggies.

Joe Mitchell

We bought the Edward and Mary in 1959, I think we had her for ten years, myself and George Wheeler. She was moored at Shoreham all through that period. When I sold her she went to somebody who worked her from Eastbourne beach. Then she went from Eastbourne to the Hastings museum, she was there. She was quite an old boat, built in the 1920s. She was one of the original boats that they ever put an engine in. A lot of it was done in the 1910s. The 1920s they started to put engines in boats, I mean the smaller beach boats anyway. She was built by a bloke named Tiny Breed. If you go down to Hastings, you even see streets named after him and a square, they were a big family. I believe he was a Mayor of Hastings one time. There was quite a few of them, the Hastings luggers, they've not really altered a lot. They may be a bit bigger and more powerful, but they're still doing the same thing, launching them from an open beach whereas in Brighton it did die out completely. You go to Brighton beach now, there's not one full-time boat being worked off the beach.

Dave May

They were good old characters. Jimmy Ovett who had the Mizpah, he had his son with him. He was a hard case, that man, he'd go to sea any weather. I remember putting an extra engine in that boat. When he was drift-net fishing, he had a six horsepower engine in her and that was just enough to keep her going ahead when they get their nets in, well, they had to slow 'em down a bit, see, while they were pulling their nets in. But I put an engine in there, and I remember we put it right down in her stern behind her mizzen mast, which used to come down through the deck, and to start the engine we had to drill a hole through the mast so they could put the starting handle through, we drilled a hole through the mast and put a pipe in it and then the old starting handle used to go through there so they could start the engine.

Bob Holden

I had the Marie Joyce first. Then I had the Mary Jane, she was built at Shoreham, Charlie Chown built her, he worked for Lady Bee. They did build them on spec, yeah, the Shoreham Pride and all. My old man bought the Mary Jane on spec. See, they built the Lucky Jim and the Girl Pat and two or three of 'em. But my old man only bought the shuck, we put the Unity's engine in her, a Kelvin. The Unity was a two-ender like what my Toot and Smithy had down in Rye. Him and Smithy. Yes, that was the engine what was in the Mary Jane. Same engine as Ted Gillam had in his boat. Twenty-two Kelvin, diesel.

'Rachel' Leach

We used to build these little fourteen-foot beach boats with a little Sussex counter-stern for the old boatmen who used to row passengers off the beach, take 'em out for a row, you know. And if we built one of them for Brighton, or Eastbourne, they'd come here and row it home. Get the tide, leave here at high water if they was going to Brighton, they had a fair tide down. Eastbourne, leave here at low water and got down there at high water. Brighton used to be loaded with little passenger boats and these little rowing-boats with the back-board in the stern seat where you could sit and lounge. We had the back-board and all fitted and this that and the other, and the old guv'nor would say, 'Take this up to Mr Callaghan.' You used to have to go up to Mr Callaghan's house in Newhaven and he'd put the flags on it, the Union Jack, the red ensign or something or the other, crossed flags. He'd paint like a rope border all the way round it and, 'To carry twelve passengers ...' so and so, all that on, used to be quite smart. See, all these boats on the beach with all their names on, looked lovely. Oh, the old days have finished, I mean all the old fishermen there in the summer, got their little old platforms for people going aboard the boat, someone touting for business up on the beach, 'Any more for the Skylark!'

The boats we used to build for boating, for the beach, like we built the Our Kathleen and the Our Doris for the Mitchells of Brighton, they only carried twelve passengers. But if you build a bigger boat, they're going to carry more, then you come under the restrictions. We did use to build boats carrying over twelve passengers, just private people. We built one for Eastbourne called the Quest, she was a nice boat, she was built of silver spruce. Silver spruce is good to work, lovely, you could get a plane on that, you could go one end to the other, beautiful, like silk. And we used to build the 'liptic-stern boats for fishing at Brighton.

We were building two boats in there at once sometimes, one in one shop and one in the other. Not the luggers, all the beach boats, up to about twenty-eight feet overall. And all them had to be through-nailed, copper nails, all drilled by hand, and one of them, say a twenty-eight foot 'lipticstern boat would have about eight thousand nails in it. When we was lads we used to count, add 'em up, and there would be about eight thousand nails in that boat. And every one was drilled by hand.

But these old fishermen was gentlemen, lovely old men. Old Bob in the Paragon, he was quite a character. We was building a boat once and I was inside her, you had to look up over the top if anyone came in the shop to see who it was, and I see old Bob walking along our bench one day. When I put my head outside, I said, 'Hello Bob, what you after?' He said, 'I want some copper tintacks. "Well, what do you want copper tin-tacks for?' 'To mend a bit of bend over our rail.' Well, these old boats you know, they was getting so old, they had convexed iron strips round them, metal strips, round the side, and the old boats were so bad that the ends used to come off where the nails had rotted off, so they'd put a bit of leather over it so that it couldn't catch in the nets. That made me laugh, these copper tin-tacks.

I used to love repair work. Well, I loved boat building, but I enjoyed repair work. Putting it all back together.

Bob Holden

If anything needed repairing on the boats I used to take that and have it repaired. I walked half-way across Brighton with a prop shaft with a propeller on the end on a pushchair and that is a thing on its own, isn't it! I've helped him when he used to scrape the boats on the beach. I used to clean the bottoms on the beach, the kids and I used to help them do that, take the floorboards out and scrape them.

Barbara Gillam

I generally had my boat on the beach the first couple of years to do her up, because the ribs and timbers would be all broken, and I also raised her up a plank. And that was my first bit of effort of boat building. I'd learned by watching a few of the others and being interested in boats, but basically it was teach yourself, like now it would be no hesitation to go and do it, because I've had the experience of doing it and I would just steam in and do it.

We used to put the nets under the floorboards, in the Surprise. We made this hold in her, up forrard, to cover back up so that you could put your herring nets in there and work your other gear over the top of them, you'd put the boards over the top of them, and it was just like a deck then, over a below-deck as it were.

Alan Hayes

Kentish Maid and Breadwinner, two of the first boats that had motor capstans. Matter of fact, I fitted them, the capstans and all the gear for the belt work. They used to have hand capstans what they used to get their trawl with, and we had 'em converted into motor. Had a gearwheel welded round the bottom, shrunk on the bottom of the capstan, the gearwheel was put on red hot and water poured on so it shrunk onto the bottom of the capstan, and then fitted them up with little jockey pulleys and all this that and the other, off the fore-end of the engine and they used to drive them off that. The first two.

For hauling the nets in, yes. Especially when they was trawling because they had to heave their trawl up.

Bob Holden

I launched this one, Tobyroc. Well, it was a funny story actually, because Ted hired a motor you know, a coach thing for people to go down, 'cos it was launched at Exmouth and that's where it was built. And we'd got the bottle of champagne and I threw it, well they had to get me a couple of boxes to stand on, I threw it and I missed, and somebody called out, 'For Christ's sake, break that bottle,' because it was all bubbling up inside, it was going to explode, and it went off like a bomb when it did hit it, it really did, it went just like a bomb. That was for the Tobyroc. That's made up of two of his [Ted's] friends, Toby and Roc.

Barbara Gillam

We moved the boats around on rollers. We got plenty of rollers because there were different boats coming in with bowsprits broke or perhaps a gaff and boom broke. Well, we'd have to make a new one, and the other one, the pieces of the other, we'd saw that up in say five-foot, six-foot lengths and they was put aside. And when we made a boat in the shop, we got that out of the shop on rollers and pulled it across the road and into the river, on rollers, because it was so simple and easy. And to steer it all we needed was a sledge-hammer, just whack the rollers round and you could steer it wherever you wanted to. Just clout the old roller round, and you wanted to go one way, well, knock it back over this side and away she go. And we had block and tackle, and a little old handwinch. We didn't use a horse, no. Oh no, we could pull up all what we wanted. There's still a little bit of the old slipway down there what we used to pull up on. Down by the Fisherman's Club, there's still a bit of it left. It was steep, yes, but we used to wait till high water, get a good run up there.

We used to launch high water, just off the river bank, in the river, we used to launch. You can stand back and you think to yourself, Well, I done that. And that was self satisfaction. There was several of you doing it, I know. We didn't celebrate, no, it was just a launch. Get on with the next job. And you know, when you launched them, just got in them, have a look, lift the flooring up, see if there's any leaks or anything like that. If there was, well, you just attend to it, and that was that. No, Cantell never gave guarantees on his boats, there wasn't no need to do that, because he never put rubbish in them. Oh, he was a good man.

Bob Holden

The seining boats were specially built, years ago. The last seining boat we had was built from two motor boats. It was built by all the wood that was left over, and we named that Bits and Pieces. Well she'd been made of different sorts of boats. But she was getting on, I mean she must have been about fifty year old, and me and my brother Joe, I think

we paid about thirty bob for it then. Mind you we had to buy stuff to repair it with, what we got off different people in them days, and we repaired it.

And the lead, they had what they called tingles. Tingles is a lead patch put over a crack in the woodworking on the bottom of the boat where she'd hit a stone on the beach. Well, the lead we got off of there paid for that boat. We got over thirty bob's worth of lead off it. In them days of course thirty bob was a lot of money.

Bobby Andrew

My mate and I thought we'd get a bigger boat and we found down at Littlehampton a thirty-one footer ship's lifeboat, galvanised steel. Just the hull, no boards, and a Scammel petrol engine. Which was a pig. But we thought we could turn this into a fishing cruiser. My mate was an engineer, which was very useful when we were making bits for the steering gear, any engineering bits. The actual hull and engine cost a total of two hundred quid. That'd be about twenty-five years ago, I suppose.

Anyway, we did get it around to Shoreham in the end and took it up the river and moored it up beside Watercraft boatyard, on the south side of the river, at the back of the gardens in Bungalow Town. And we then proceeded to work on this boat for, well, months and months, and buying stuff and materials as we could afford it. Decked it, put steering gear in it, put a wheel-house on it, named it Mi Mujer which is Spanish for my woman, which is corny but seemed all right at the time. When we bought it, it was called nothing, it was called ship's lifeboat number so-and-so. And we took it to sea a couple of times but because it had got no keel and no bilge-keels, you'd have to aim it at Lancing to get it into Shoreham Harbour, it would almost go sideways across the bloody water, it was a real pig.

So I sold it, and I had enough money to go after this boat at Newhaven, which was my first proper fishing boat. It was called the Treble Chance, because the bloke that had it had won some money on the Treble Chance. Originally it was called the Corn Sack, which I think had fished out of Rye during the war so it was quite an old boat. I bought it for four hundred and fifty pounds; which I didn't think was bad at the time, and we brought it round from Newhaven on a Saturday. Although there was a near-gale blowing, it performed perfectly well, and we got into Shoreham and tied up, and that was my first trip in it and I was really pleased.

I had it for I think about two years, going up and down the river a lot, because I used to go all the year round, there were fishing boats moored up on Kingston Wharf then, down on the north side of the river near the lifeboat station. And there was one boat there that I always admired and used to be my dream-boat, excuse the pun. And that was the boat called the Christie Sue, which was bigger than mine, it was twenty-five foot on the waterline, and it was immaculate.

And then I heard that this boat was up for sale, two thousand quid. And I thought, I wonder if I can get that. I didn't have the cash obviously. I made some enquiries and found out that I could get a marine mortgage. So I sold the Treble Chance for six hundred and fifty quid, which was two hundred quid more than I'd paid for it, and had a couple of years' use out of it, alright I'd maintained it and overhauled the engine myself. And anyway, I've got the boat and as I say it was twenty-five foot, had a thirty-horse Petter engine in it which was immaculate, I mean it had hardly been used. And the boat was really nice, really nice to handle, comfortable in rough weather, it would take a lot more rough weather than I would be prepared to go out in, a lot more. And it was just like stepping from an Austin Seven into a Rolls Royce. It handled well and as far as I was concerned it was the prettiest boat in Shoreham, at the time.

Peter Richards

Old Sammy Andrews in Our Maggie, I went aboard there one day, and I was going to do a job. She was so old that her bulwark stanchions was going outboards and they was coming away under the deck, away from the sides. And they kept on patching her up and patching her up. And then her deck beams, they was going, they was flattening out, instead of the deck beams having a bit of a camber in them, well one of them down in the cabin there where they had a little upright boiler, because they had a steam capstan, and the steam pipe went through an hole in the beam and the old beam was flattening out as the sides was going out, and it was resting on the pipe. So I had to go down there and take the flooring up and cor, that was in a state under there with grease and everything.

'Cor,' I said, 'she's in a bit of a state down there, Sam,' and he said, 'Yeah, when we bought her she was so nice down there, they used to keep the pots and pans down under the floor.' Of course originally she never had an engine in her. And I jacked this beam up in the air, off the keel, and put a strut under it. And her decks were so bad it was leaking through her deck into their bunks underneath. I should think she was built at the beginning of the century, might have been before that. They'd last forty or fifty years, very old.

Bob Holden

The first year we had the Surprise, we used to go out in a breeze and we'd come back in and she'd be sinking. You obviously slam and fall off the seas, you can bet your life we had to get back in the harbour and soo her out on the beach and knock some caulking in her. She was taking water between the planks, every rib was broken. Although she was a nice shape she was very slightly built, and she'd had a hard life before I had her, people neglected her and squashed her a few times, between big boats, in Newhaven.

And the next summer we had her out the water on Lady Bee's yard and we stripped her right out and we re-timbered her, or re-ribbed her as they call it, right the way through

and strengthened her up with some big floor timbers, oak frames in her. We was a long time doing it, six or eight weeks I expect, at least. Me and Frank set to in the summer there and bought some lovely oak. These timbers were steamed, they went down one side of her, along her bottom and halfway up the other side. So that the other timber came down the same and so she was double-timbered as we call it, ribbed, in her bottom.

She wasn't quite as square or as sharp-sided as the old beach boats, she was a better boat to steam timbers in. An easier round as it were. Mind you it was the right time of year to do it, baking hot summer. Bearing in mind the timber would have been twelve or fourteen-foot long, one piece of oak, green oak, is what you done them with. About an inch and three-quarters by about an inch and a quarter, I think. The first one we took out the steam-pot and steamed round, you'd never believe a bit of oak would go like it, but I feel sure you could have made a figure of eight with it. We couldn't control it, it just went everywhere, like a snake. Well, we soon got the grasp of that, that we steamed it alongside of one of the original ones, and just put a little tack in it to hold it while it cooled off. So we got her all shipshape again by the season, the fall, and this time we got a winch in her, and a trawl so we were now able to go trawling, netting and drifting for herring. So yes, there was a big improvement in her, plus just after that, or the next year, we moved to the Marina.

Alan Hayes

It's complicated, yes, it's difficult. People probably don't understand. I could do the job all right, I can see it now, but it's hard to explain how we did it. It was rule of thumb. They still use those techniques, yes. There's a boat being built down here this year, down the bottom of the road here. They haven't sold her yet but she's a nice boat. But you don't get many boats built now, it's all fibreglass. It's gradually dying out.

Bob Holden

He was an artist with a needle

My earliest memory is of my father sitting indoors braiding a net, a quarter inch shrimp net for lace curtains. And that's passed down. It's a natural thing. I mean it seems a bit crude now but I suppose in Ted's house, his father was a lovely man too - old Ted Gillam's - he had the old rings, and all. I bet he had a six-inch nail in his mantelpiece where they used to hook the nets!

Joe Mitchell

My dad taught me how to braid, how to mend a net, how to cut a net, to scarf a net together and how to make up a net. I made two set nets up for myself before the War in the house down in Frederick Street. My sisters did their nut, as I had a net-line stretched

from the kitchen to right through to the front room, making these nets up and they couldn't bring anybody in.

Steve Ovet

In my basement flat in Kemp Town there used to be nets stretched from right out the kitchen, right through the hall into the living room right through to the front door. If somebody came along when I was in the middle of hanging the net they'd have to come in through the window. My wife was very patient about that.

Peter Richards

Don't matter what old fisherman's home you went in then, they was either mending nets or making nets or braiding nets. You see everything today, it's all made and you just piece it together. I never learnt anything about making them, not before my father taught me. I partly learnt myself. There ain't no net I can't make. I can make a tennis net, I can make a lacrosse net, football net, any net, I can make any net.

Bobby Andrew

Oh God, I tell you what if you'd have walked into my house sometimes, you'd have run out! We had nets that come straight out of the water, and we used to have a big old bedspread, or counterpane, whichever I'd got, and he used to bring them in and mend them in there, all the seaweed ...! We've made a sail, a mizzen, together, it's like a sail, we made that together. We made a ground rope which nobody would believe you could make in a house, but we sat on the floor and made that.

Have you seen the needles they use? They were wooden with two prongs about an inch long each on the back of it, now I'm going back forty-odd years now, when we were in Mighell Street where the American Express is. And I'm sitting in a chair nodding to sleep and he's [Ted] doing his trawls, 'cos he always had a net indoors to do, and he's pulled it back behind him to tighten the twine, he's pulled the needle right back, and I was behind him asleep in the chair, and the prongs of the needle went up my nose - one in each nostril. I couldn't tell you what I said, except that he wouldn't dare do that while I was awake. It nearly took the nose off my face!

Barbara Gillam

Even when we was up Elmore Road, he used to be sitting there mending the net and we could be watching telly and then all of a sudden he'd [Ted] throw a crab claw at you that had been in the net for three or four weeks - it smelt absolutely rancid! He's a right character, he's really funny, the things he used to do to make us laugh were unbelievable.

Sometimes we used to help fill the needles up and do nussles; all it is is like a piece of twine and you have to twist it, to make a loop in the end and put it on a long piece of wood which me dad used to sharpen like a pencil so he could put that on the top of the net, I don't know what it works for!

Linda Gillam

Some of them even used to make their own nets by hand braiding, so you can imagine making a net about two or three hundred yards long was a lot of work, but they used to do it and all the family used to do it. The children used to have to sit down and fill the needles up and the father used to do it. In them days they'd be making nets from early morning. I can always remember old Teddy Gillam's daughter when she got married, Val, she couldn't understand the quietness of always waking up every morning, it was a sign of confidence in her to hear the whoosh of the net when the old man used to stand there braiding. She would wake up as a kid and she would sit there and listen, and she would lay in bed and it would give her confidence because she would know her dad was down there. Every fisherman's family used to have the hook by the window or by the hearth and woe betide anyone who moved the hook, you'd be thrown out in the garden.

Dave May

Well, you had the long needles, about a foot long and they was shaped like that, cone-shape, flat, and you had a spike, one spike in the middle, you carved them out where there was a spike in the middle of the head of it. So you tied the twine on the spike first and then you went over that one, down underneath this needle, over the top, over there ..., till you filled the needle up. No, that's only just running the twine onto the needle. And then you'd cut your net out, what we used to call ... they used to say, 'Cut the hole out,' but it's true, you had to cut it out, so you went along a row, picked up one, went along another row, pick up two meshes the other side.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Cotton and hemp. Hemp lines. Now today they've got everything, haven't they? They've got lead-lines - you don't have to worry about making your own leads. They've got proper lead-line, one line with lead in it; you've got the floating line today, corks - everything is so different today. Buy them in skeins. Well, you'd buy cotton by a pound ball, pound spool, or pound skein - used to be skeins, skeins in them days - like the wool. Well, when I come out of school every night, when my father was home and he wasn't fishing - because my father used to make all his own trawls - beam trawls my father used to use, beam trawls - and four o'clock, to go out of a night, to get anything off him you had to do something. I had to wind off must have been ten knots, ten skeins; I used to have to wind two of them off in a great ball like that, and you used to have to thread him up about eight or nine needles for making the trawls.

Bobby Andrew

Start off with a ball of twine and the old wooden needles. I've got tons of them, down the Arches. It used to take, you know, two or three weeks or more, sometimes. You'd stick at it all day, we used to have to. Oh, when I was at school, I used to have two or three needlesful of twine before I could go out the door, of a night. That was at home, yeah. We used to call it braiding, making a trawl. We used to braid all our own trawls. Otter trawls and the beam trawls, you know, but we mostly had otter trawls then.

Otter trawls, you got two big boards with angle irons on 'em and iron on the runners at the bottom, and you drop them over the side and they keep the trawl net open. You tow 'em along. And you had to shape them that way, the nets for that. And then before that they had just a beam trawl. They had big irons bent round like that way, and a big beam on each, a beam right through it, so that held 'em up, but you had the net level with the beam, then, made fast to the beam. So you had an eighteen-foot beam, you had eighteen foot of netting on it.

'Big Ted' Gillam

For small boats which normally come up and down the beach, they were normally braided by the fishermen themselves, because they were small nets and they were usually braided with hemp, on a spool. You put the twine round a spool and you double hitch it. And therefore you go along on a row all along. But the bigger nets which were mostly built in those days of sisal and manilla, they were made by netmakers, which came from Bridport and Devon, some were made down there. A lot of them of course were made at Grimsby and Yarmouth and Lowestoft, those places.

John Leach

All the nets, the drift nets and that used to come from away, from places like Bridport. The trawls and that, they used to make their own, they might send away for one, but it was all made by hand. They only had beam trawls years ago, which you see in old photos, but otter trawls came out with the boards and so my father was the first one to braid an otter trawl in Brighton, along the Sussex coast here, to get it to fish properly and that was my dad.

He was an artist with a needle, I could never match him and neither could my grandfather. If he mended a net you wouldn't even see where he had mended it. Anyway, us children used to help in little ways, my dad used to bring home what they used to call nussles, the nussle goes on the net-line, from the net to net-line, and there used to be five nussles between each cork, it was to tie the net to the net-line. When they first come, they were white, twine like, twisted up and you had a stick about eighteen inches long and get a bundle of nussles under your arm, pull one out, untwist the eye and shove it up the stick, until the stick was full. My dad used to give us sometimes about a penny or halfpenny a stick to earn you about a shilling.

When they were mending their nets down the Arch, I used to go down there and fill the needles. Well, they always had the cotton hanging over the knees, you know like knitting. If you let a loop go, it's all messed up and it's one hell of a job to get it out, so I thought of an idea. I was only about twelve, thirteen years old at the time, I made this stand, I got the idea from a stool-ball stand. I made like a stool-ball stand, stapled down through it, put a cross on the top, drilled some holes and put some pegs in, made a flat windmill and put the twine or cotton on that and sat there and reeled it off. That's the first time my grandfather ever gave me any praise, 'That's the finest thing anybody ever made,' he said. I still have today my dad's two old needles, with his initials on and his braiding spoons.

Steve Overt

Well, you've only got to know when to cut and know when to finish. There's only one knot, that's the half-hitch. You start off on a bit of net and narrow it down. As my dad said, 'When you tear a net' - when you was seining, whatever it was - he said, 'Don't dash at it to repair it,' he said, 'Spread it out, spread it out.' He said, 'Look at it, go home. Have your breakfast, and think about it.' He said, 'You learn, don't you dash it.' It's true. And he says, 'You get a net' - say that's a mesh, you've got a lot of holes in it - he said, 'Don't worry about all the holes,' he says, 'Provided you've got the net,' he said, 'Cut all the holes out and put a spare bit of net in.' He says, 'You'll get it done five times quicker than what you would try to mend every hole.' And it proved right.

Bobby Andrew

Anybody who wants a trawl mended, they bring them down to me. I'm doing some herring nets down on the beach now for one of the old boys down there, mending it. Where the Hard used to be, I'm just along further than that. Where the Arches are, yeah. That's where they bring me the nets that they want to get mended, yeah. One of my relations, he brought a net in from Newhaven, a trawl, asked me to mend it. And when I pulled it out it wanted a bit of netting, what shall I say, about fourteen to fifteen foot square, and it's still down the Arch now. But he got sacked from the boat, and the owner's come in and asked if I'd done it, and I showed 'em what ... I'd mended odd bits in it, and I said, 'I can't mend all that,' you know, and it's still down the Arch now. They've never been back since, so it's still laying there.

'Big Ted' Gillam

The passed down skill really has disappeared, I mean fishermen still make their nets as such, they put them together but nobody literally braids nets any more. Years ago, any fisherman, you could go round his house, he used to have a hook by his fireplace and he sat there and he'd make a net, what they used to call braiding.

Dave May

You ask them to make you a trawl they wouldn't make you a trawl. See, when they make trawls today they don't worry about putting narrow ones or wide ones or anything, they just get a square bit of net, big bit of net like that, cut the trawl out to shape from it. And sew it all together. When my father used to go up there say, say about a hundred meshes, he used to put narrowings all the way down, fetch it right the way down and then put the cod end on. They don't do that, they just cut it out in a lump today. Everything's so easy today, know what I mean? And it's cheaper.

Bobby Andrew

They used to tan the nets and all, on the beach, big tanks and use cutch. Dip the nets in and pull 'em out, lift 'em out ... keep 'em strong. Course it's different now, it's all nylon, it was all cotton those days.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

To tan, you have a big tank, you boil it up, and you put this what we call cutch, it's a cleaning thing, in blocks they were, like chocolate you could say, and you put that in a basket and melt it and you dip your, you used to clean your nets right through. You do that twice a year. When you put 'em in and when you take them out.

'Big Ted' Gillam

There were six men to the crew at this stage, and they were all busy stoking the fire, getting the nets out of the store and carrying them over to the tank ready to be put in the tank when the water was hot enough. While all this was happening the cutch had been put into the tank to dissolve. It was in a basket on a piece of rope so we could pull it out of the water to see if it was dissolving. This stuff saved the net from rotting. The nets were put into the tank six at a time and left for at least an hour, after which they were lifted out by hand onto a board to drain off, then they were put onto a hand barrow and carried away to where they were ready to be what we call 'bent in', that is sewn together to make one net of them all. Then they were taken to Shoreham Harbour by lorry where the boat was moored, then they were stowed in the boat all ready for sea.

Edward Pierce

They used to have herring nets and mackerel nets. They used to say, 'We're bending in next week.' When you talk about bending in, all your nets are joined together on the beach. Before you bend them in, you always dip them in cutch. In other words you preserve them for the season that's come upon you. We used to tan them. Have you seen the sails that are brown? The ships with sails that are brown? That's what we call tan. It's the bark of a tree. It's a day's work. You get this cutch and you melt it, and all the boat's crew would assemble. In Brighton we had a tan-house in Foundry Street. We'd take eighty or ninety nets up there. Put them in a lorry, them days we used to put all the nets all together. What's called bend them in. We used to say bending them in.

We used to bend them in. Pull them out of the lorry, bend them in, and then put them in the tank what you were going to dip them in. And they'd stop there. That's how it operated. For a start the tanning side of it is knowledge. What I mean to say is, if you came down to the beach with me tomorrow, and I said I was going to start tanning tomorrow, you wouldn't know what I was talking about. That's all knowledge.

Dick Taylor

Well we were doing the Surprise up, we were pleasure-tripping with people on the good days, in the Peace & Plenty, this is 1976, and my wife used to sit on the beach nussling the herring nets, that's putting little bits of twine on them. She'd sit there nussling these herring nets over her stomach, which was then carrying Kerry, and she nussled all the twenty nets up. And we fiddled along, we didn't earn fortunes but we got by. We caught a few more herring than we'd caught previous years, because of the investment in the twenty brand-new nets.

Alan Hayes

When they lit the fires underneath the tan coppers you can imagine all the boats tanning around about the same time, before the bending in time [mackerel season], when they took their nets out. So you see, they would have all their fish boxes underneath there burning to get the caddycue hot, or cutch is the trade name, but they called it caddycue, for tanning purposes and they would put all the nets in that, boil them up and put lids, weights on the top to keep them down when boiling. Give them a boil up, let them cool down, get the nets out and dry them on the beach and when they got dry enough, they would hang them over the rail to finish them off. That was the tanning process. Well, you can imagine all that smoke from the fires drifting away with a nice sou'westerly breeze down towards Sir Harry Preston's hotel and the Queens Hotel. I think they stopped them from tanning at the weekends which they never did anyway, but they got banned and I think another day in the week they weren't allow to tan but that was the tanning process and the drying.

The purpose of the tanning the nets was to preserve them. The nets were made of cotton and the trawls were made of twine. The drift nets were cotton so they were oiled, boiled oil, then tan them and that would preserve them. The fishermen's tanned frocks, well they used to throw them in the copper as well, if their wives had made them a tanned frock, they would bring that down if they were tanning and put that in as well. You would probably see them on the beach with a spar or an oar through them, hanging across a capstan or something like that for drying. They used to tan the nets, the tan frocks, they tan any cottons to mend their nets with or twine that would all be done at that particular time.

Steve Ovet

It's made with tanned twine, we used to tan it. We used to buy a box of catch, it was called. It's like chocolate to look at. But you used to have to break it up, put the pieces in a basket, boil the water, a big tub of water you had, boil it, in a tin thing, a tank like, and it used to melt and you used to make a brown whatsername. You used to do your mackerel nets with that and all.

Well, it used to clean your nets really, that's what it used to do. But the mackerel nets, when you had mackerel nets, you oiled them first, when they was white,, that was half linseed oil and half of boiled oil. And you oiled them, and then you put 'em through a mangle or draw them through your hand to take the oil out of them. And then you'd stretch them along the beach and let them dry off. You done all your trammel nets like that, I do the trammel nets now, the same, with that oil. You had a barrel cut in half. The big barrels what the oil used to come in, used to cut 'em in half. That was all done on the beach, yeah. And you hauled them out on the beach. And if it looked like being a frosty night, we used to have to go down, and haul them in water, put 'em in the water, because if the frost got at 'em he used to kill the oil. They'd never dry. You oiled them and you had to wait for the oil to dry in the net. The cotton nets, it was only cotton then. They do exactly the same thing now, oil 'em now. And they're nylon nets.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Well, these trammel nets at the time I started were all cotton nets. They had to be linseed oiled in the winter, hauled out on the beach and you couldn't leave them, you can't now, because we still oil them now, linseed oil. They're all nylon now. It's only more or less Brightoners and Shorehamers and Newhaveners oil them. Hastings wouldn't dream of oiling them. Nor would any other place, I don't think. But it's just for that first period.

Any rate we'd have to oil them on the beach. You'd pull them out in the winter time, and you had to pull them over every day, very light, because if you left them in a lump, meaning like if you left them hunched up, they would catch alight, because it's spontaneous combustion. Yes, and they still do. Even these nylon nets, if we have them, we oil them now. We take a few more chances with them, because the actual stuff doesn't catch, but they have caught, and like burnt, and burnt the actual net.

We can haul our gear now and we'll get what we call a lot of clutter, like bits of weed, bits of crab, and you can run them in the boat, and you can go down the next day, that is it, you've got them in a big pile in the boat, and you wouldn't be able to put your hand inside of them for being so hot, and when you shoot them the steam comes out of them. That is the same as a compost heap, spontaneous combustion.

Alan Hayes

You had the nets, they used to be about a hundred and forty meshes deep, about inch and a half mesh net, and you roped them in so that they was diamond-shaped. The net

held diamond-shaped so the mackerel swim into it. And we used to tie 'em all together, and we used to put a light on the end, dan light, ordinary paraffin light, on the end, on a dan, a float, it was a pole right through a bit of cork with some weight on the bottom. They still use the dans now for this trammel-netting. But these, we used to put a light on so if a steamer come along you'd have your lights rigged on the boat, a paraffin light, one high and one about six or seven foot lower than the other, pointing towards where your nets lay. And if a steamer was coming down too close to you, we used to have an old tin can with paraffin in it, and you had a piece of iron, with all rag wrapped round it with wire, on the end of a handle, and you'd catch that fire [wave it to and fro] under the bulwark of the boat, try to make the steamers go inside of you, instead of going over your nets. You'd tell 'em to go inside of your lights.

We had steamers come over us lots of times, tear your nets up. But you used that to try to get 'em inside, some wouldn't alter for you, they'd just go over and cut you in half, cut the nets in half.

'Big Ted' Gillam

And the attitudes of the skippers on the beam trawlers are diabolical, you know, like I say they own nothing at all and they don't realise if they ... for instance they could wipe me out in one night, they could completely wipe me out altogether. If I work five fleets of nets you're looking at three or four thousand pounds' worth of gear, they could go and tow that away in one night and that would be me absolutely finished. That skipper could get back into harbour and say, 'Oh I've had enough, I'm going.' And he's lost nothing but he's finished me completely.

I've heard stories, a friend of mine was actually on one of them as crew for a short time and he couldn't believe the attitude of the skipper. He knew my nets were somewhere, and he said, 'Let's go and have a bit of fun here,' and he actually towed the nets away, then went back out in the deep water, and when we asked about it he said, 'There was a boat out there last night,' and was laughing about it.

They won't insure your nets, no, nobody will. They will insure the nets if they are on the boat, if you haven't got them in the sea, so basically, it's a waste of time.

They say they can't prove anything, and we can't prove whatever boat caught them, although we've seen it. If I'm on my own, which I am 'cos I'm single-handed, so if I'm on the boat on my own and I see a boat tow my nets away, who are they going to listen to?

John Gillam

As I said, years ago when you had the old cotton nets and hemp nets, you used to catch so much a lot of it used to drop away and live again. But now they've got these new nets, these midwater trawls, and seines, all these monofold nets. Once they get in that net, in that nylon net, fine nylon net, this monofold, they can't get out, they can't get

out. See and the whole trouble is, if they lose them nets they're still fishing, because what happens is the fish goes in the net, sinks to the bottom, and directly that fish rots, that net comes up again. So it's fishing. No matter what gets snared in there, it just takes it. It's progress they say, progress.

Bobby Andrew

I'm going tonight if it blows the stars out the sky

We picked up our knowledge from the fishermen, and that's how we got the information. As we grew older, and we mixed with fishermen, we still had the knowledge gradually going into our head - let's say, well, the knowledge gradually grew on you. Whoever you went fishing with, a lot of people, they went fishing with their fathers, and that's how it went on. Picking all this knowledge up. That's who they were getting it from. Who else could you get it from? It all starts from knowledge, as you probably know.

Dick Taylor

My family, my dad and relations have all been fishing since, oh, as far as I know been here since Brighthelmston. I first used to go down there when I was about thirteen, thirteen years old I used to go with my uncles. See, because my family, my mother used to belong to the seining side of the family, and my father used to be a longshoreman, used to be in bigger boats. He used to go out of Newhaven and Shoreham.

Bobby Andrew

My first time involved with fishing started with my father. He taught me how to fish. When I was seven or eight years old he started me on the East Street breakwater. It starts from there.

Len Trussell

It used to start off with me and the old man, he'd be in bed in the afternoon and he'd get up and the old lady would say, 'Where you going Jim?' 'I'm going to shove off,' he says. That would be when they used to go late autumn fishing when the herring were just coming in. And the little boats on the beach, the fourteen-footers, they used to have their nets in and they'd go out, just at dusk you know, and get out to where the fishing grounds were, that they thought, because fish always were in shoals. And the old man, he's going to shove off, so I says, 'Do you want me to come with you Dad?' And he says, 'Yeah, you can come down and help me.' He'd go out in the evening and come back about three o'clock in the morning, after shoaling, and I used to go down on the beach at that time and I used to heave up.

James Ward

I might have been about four or five. In them days while you were still at school - well, you more or less had to go with your father. A lot of us did, fishing. And when we left school it was automatic, you went fishing, and then when you was capable you used to take charge of the boat. Well, I never took charge of a boat, never. I went full-time fishing, for about four years, and that was for the whole season: the herring season, the mackerel season, trammel season, and trawling.

Johnny Humphrey

Most of the fishermen here then used to fish for seasons. See, some used to fish in the first part of the year, say from beginning of March, middle of March, they used to put what they called trammels, used to go out in the morning, shoot their nets, leave them all day and all night and then go out early the next morning and pick them up. And then a lot of them used to go trawling, and then when the mackerel come in, toward the end of April, May, June, they used to go mackerel-catching. And when the weather was bad what they used to do then was to go down on the beach here and on the seafront here and they used to mend all their nets.

Bobby Andrew

Well, I started with my father, before I left school I used to go odd days, especially on a Friday night. We used to go all night fishing them days. The only time we went daylight was like in the spring of the year. But on the twenty-first of March you used to cross the line, and I mean this is what the old people done it by, by the time of the year. You'd go away and shoot your trammel nets then, off of Shoreham. You shoot them and leave them there all the time, and you haul them the next day.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Trammel nets was sort of like a wall net; you had the inner net, and your two like what they used to call the walls on the outside. You had the lead-line on the bottom, your cork-line on top, you had an inner net which was a small-scale net, like that hanging on the wall, a small-scale net. And then the two outer nets which they called the walls, which was big mesh. Your inner nets was more or less bag nets - when the fish went into them, they'd push into the inner nets, and they'd tangle themselves up with your outer walling and that. That's what they used to call trammel-netting, which means - it's a French word saying 'tre-mels', three nets in one. Are you with me? That's the trammel, the three nets in one. And course they was - you would set them, you had an anchor on each end, probably about twelve to fifteen nets, which would give you a distance of about four, maybe five hundred yards, I expect, and on each end of that you had an anchor, holding those nets down, on the sea bed, and from the anchor you had a cork-line which fetch you up to what they called a dan, which was a marker buoy, used to come up on the surface of the sea. With the trammel, you used to shoot them out during the day, leave them all day, leave them all night, and used to go out there five or six o'clock the following morning, get them back, take the fish out, clear 'em while you

was out, take the fish out of your nets, and shoot your nets back in the water for the following day. They was fishing while you was in bed, or if you was doing something else. If there was trawling and trammelling, you'd see that extra. Because your trammel nets was catching a lot, especially cod, when the cod was about, and they was catching more cod in those trammels than what you was catching in the trawl.

Ted Watherington

Well, a trammel net is, the actual translation is 'trois mel,' is three walls. It's a large diameter net on the outside which could be three or four foot or even six foot high, then you have a baggy net of much smaller mesh on the inside, then another large diameter net on the outside. So what happens is if anything goes through those large diameter walls, they then push into a pocket and invariably twist, because fish don't know how to go backwards, twist and then are in a pocket they just can't get out of.

It's a very efficient way of catching fish. But having said that it also catches everything, right down to small, even hermit crabs, everything, starfish, all the rubbish there is in the sea, these'll catch, and it takes a lot of cleaning.

Alan Hayes

These traditional trammel grounds were at a point about four miles due south of Shoreham and then a little bit to the west. You determined the north-south line by getting the top of Shoreham Lighthouse, which we called the high light, directly over the end of the eastern breakwater. It was understood that east of this line was reserved for trawling and there was no trammelling, at any season.

Jimmy Howell

And daytime, if you was going out especially with the trammel nets, if you was going out on a bit of ground with your trammel nets, you always had your daytime shore marks. There used to be two big chimneys at Shoreham, now there's only one. But those two big chimneys, when they built them just after the War, was good marks. Then there was at Lancing, you had a church there, called the Church of the Good Shepherd. That was one of the main marks, the west marks. Pair that mark up with something else, and you knew where you were. Oh yeah, we weren't fishing thirty, forty miles off. The furthest you was fishing out here at night would be about five or six miles off. What they used to call onshore fishing. You only ventured out in the deep if there was anything worthwhile going after.

Ted Watherington

Most boats would work the low water, so you would get five or six boats going out of Shoreham Harbour all at the same time, all with their mizzens set, with a light

sou'westerly wind, and we'd all motor out to between three and six mile we'll say, and they would all roughly be finished the same time. If you were the second to last boat in, meaning that you'd finished and there was one boat further out, you just jogged in very slow or just laid there while you cleared up until he'd finished. We all got on pretty well together, but even if perhaps we weren't the best of friends with the last bloke finishing, you somehow just hung about, gutting up, just for fear of him, like him getting a net round the propeller.

Alan Hayes

After I started to go out with trammels we used to pull them up, stand on the foredeck with your apron on to keep you dry, and start pulling the nets. There were anchors and cables and goodness knows what. [The nets] used to run in fleets. They used to run about twenty-two nets in a fleet. That was about eight or nine miles out. Off of Worthing. It's a long way out. The water was shallower there, off of Worthing, you've got to go that distance to get that depth of water. See, not only that, you go by the depth of water where you do get the depth, where you want to be. See what I mean? And you know where you are by the marks. You go out for the ground. I'd say to you, 'Where are you fishing today?' 'Not far.' This is a conversation. 'Not far. Over there, into Shoreham.' That's the harbour we used mostly.

Dick Taylor

My father just stuck to mackerel-catching, herring-catching and trawling and in later years they had trammels. When they first had the trammels on the Mizpah, they shot them out on the trammel ground which is anywhere up the west end, out off Shoreham Harbour, well out. They were out there this day going to get their nets in the morning, they had been trawling all night, and going to get their nets, just in time to see a Frenchman cut half their nets away and beating away to the sou'west, and they could never catch him and they lost half their fleet of trammel nets. Out of about twenty nets they lost ten.

Steve Ovet

Years ago we were trammelling in the small boats - of course they had little engines in them days not big diesels like they've got now - we used to go up to catch the last train over to Southwick, and then get out at Southwick, walk up to Kingston, and there's some railway arches there, and they used to be an ex-army Major living in one of them and he always used to make us welcome, and we'd go over there and sleep in his arch, as you might say, his accommodation until about, say, four o'clock in the morning - of course the first train didn't leave Brighton until five o'clock. And then we'd go out, and it used to take us an hour to get on our nets, and then we'd get in most probably any time from two to six o'clock at night that day. So, we were leaving home about ten o'clock at night and getting home six or seven o'clock the following evening.

Johnny Humphrey

Well, all the trammelmens then, or most of them - not so much trawlermen because they weren't working the gear so much - would have bandages all round their wrists, and they always reckoned that red flannel was the best. Even the Lowestoftmen and all that, in the old drifters. Because obviously oil gear then was oil gear, not wet-weather gear what we call it, we still call it oil gear, but what it was it was calico smocks and that, all linseed oiled, and obviously used to be as stiff as anything, and it would rub you all round your neck and all round your wrists. And these salt water boils, these are a thing with fishing right the way round the country. I used to get them, a hell of a lot, and like I say I think a lot of it was my age. I don't get them now, no, I might just get the little one come up, but then we wear rubber gloves.

Alan Hayes

When we worked the trammel nets, we only used to have twenty because we used to pull them up by hand and if you didn't work on that slack tide, you had to go back the same way you see, on the tide. But now they just touch a switch and it's coming in at them all the time, see they haven't got that pulling to do, else they wouldn't be able to work these two or three other nets what they got in. Three or four hundred nets in a boat is taking up some room.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

John: With the trammel-netting as we are doing now you try to get two years out of your nets, you try to make them last two years, but with the amount of spider crabs we've had we haven't even got a year out of them. The spider crabs walk through the nets and chew them up.

Andrew: It's awkward to explain really because if you explain to people who've never been fishing, and know nothing about fishing and you say there's so many crabs we can't work, they think you're round the bend.

John & Andrew Gillam

Anyway I obviously wasn't going to make a go of it full-time fishing, because you do need a large outlay. Nets, at that time I'd have needed about a thousand quid to spend on nets alone. I then bought some second-hand trammel nets, much-holed trammel nets, and shot those weekends, or during the holidays and fished. I never got a lot of fish but it was very satisfying to haul up and get some fish, and crabs, I got quite a lot of crabs, which were a real so-and-so in the net. And I was shooting about ten trammels then which was about five or six hundred yards long, which had to be hauled by hand, which what it means is that you're virtually pulling the boat along the nets to haul it in, and then you've got to clean them yourself and it's just - I found it too much.

Peter Richards

You go trammelling then, up till the first of May. And that's when the mackerel boats fitted out. There was no arguments, no trouble, you all brought your trammel nets in. And you would fit out for mackerel-catching, and everybody would go mackerel-catching. It's because if you got a trammel net down, you got the dans, you know, the marker buoys, one on each side of the fleet, and you're under the guidance of the tide, and you could drive down over the trammel nets, get smashed, tear the nets up. So all the trammelmens used to bring their nets in when a mackerel boat fitted out. And there was no argument, they just done it.

'Big Ted' Gillam

There is ground fish, or mostly ground fish, such as plaice, sole, lemon soles, turbot, brills, skate, huss and those sort of fish. They are normally on the sea bed all the year round, more prevalent in the summer when the water was warm and they come inshore more. In the winter they go into the deeper water like you would put on an overcoat - the deeper the water the more warmth there is, so they go out. In the early part of the year of course the plaice come in to breed and spawn in shallow waters.

You've got another fish that does travel in large quantities and travel in shoals and that's dogs, what people would call small sharks but they're not much bigger than dogs. What you get in the fried fish shops as huss. That's a dog. They swim in shoals too. Now, mackerel are very similar to herring. They start on the east coast and follow along the south coast, but they're a different time of the year. They normally catch mackerel about May. They also swim in shoals like herring do, and they swim down the east coast and through the Straits of Dover and along the south coast and they go right down to Looe in Cornwall and even farther. Our boats, we had the boats along the south coast which were big enough, which were twenty-five, thirty foot, thirty-five foot long would go down and follow them and catch them all the time and land them in the markets at which they were. If they were off of Bournemouth they'd land them in Poole, if they were a little bit farther down they'd land them at Brixham. And then when the voyage finished there, they would turn around and come back empty.

John Leach

Queenie: The local ones [mackerel] they go right round the coast, you see.

Roger: That depends on the weather, the warmth of the water, in general you know whether it's warm or cold, or there's a storm or something. Sometimes I remember years where there's hardly been a mackerel. Another time I can remember years ago, I've gone down there and I've been sort of catching them off the stones, you know, on the beach, just with a little bit of line, they were giving themselves up.

'Queenie' Foster & Roger Harding

To fit out the mackerel - and you was in a big fishing boat, a lugger - you used to have about, what shall I say? Have about eighty or ninety nets. You always need more mackerel nets than herring nets, you don't really want so many nets. If you made a good catch of herring, you wanted all the space for working for your fish, because you always caught more herring than you did mackerel. Say we were going fishing, we come round, go down the market, we said to the skipper, 'We'll fit out today,' fit the boat out with the equipment we were going to use. So that's what we used to do, that's the expression we used, and we did get the boat fitted out, see. That's how it went, word for word.

Dick Taylor

We always went mackerel-drifting. As soon as the first of May came in, all the boats used to fit out with mackerel nets, and they are controlled by the tide. Wherever you shot them nets you went with the tide. There was dozens of boats, mackerel-catching. We used to carry about thirty or forty nets, mackerel-catching, in each boat. Drifting they used to call that.

'Big Ted' Gillam

My main interest was with the mackerel, mackerel-drifting, drift-netting for mackerel. My first skipper, when I was sixteen or seventeen years old, was called Harry Marchant, one of the old ones, and the name of the boat I went out on was the Sportsman. And from then on I used to help from boat to boat, you know, so some days I went out on different boats. It depends on who was going off the beach, and if I was down there first, and if I was the early one, I used to get a berth. My first job, when I went to sea, was making the tea! For the skipper and the crew. Because I was only a sort of helping hand. And that was my introduction to big boat fishing.

Len Trussell

When you got the nets in, he'd have about half a hundred of mackerel, something like that, then they put the mast back up again - they took the [main] mast down every time they shot, set the jigger, because they never took their mizzen down - said, 'There you are my son, cook the grub and call us up about four o'clock.' So you had to cook the grub and then call them about four o'clock, with the grub. They was all turned in. And then when you took the dinner up you called them, then you had to go up on deck while they ate it.

'Rachel' Leach

You had ten nets of fifty yards long, five hundred yards odd of net, plus your anchors and cables, and you had to throw the lead-line, it was a proper art, the lead-line runs all along the bottom of the net. I wasn't a very good shooter, because I never had much height, I was quite small. You always shoot with the tide so that they go out tight. It was very easy, shooting up head to wind, to get it round your propeller, I've done it a couple

of times, obviously everybody had done it at some time. Of course if you're heading into the wind you can't slow down, you have to keep her going to be able to have steerage way, unless your head falls off either side of the wind, and if it falls off on the wrong side that you're shooting then to get her back the net runs under the boat and catches the propeller.

And hauling, like I say, you would actually stand on the foredeck of our beach boats and haul them by hand, which, when they were full of stones and it was rough, that was quite an art. One man usually, hand over hand, yes. And there were some strong fellows used to come with us, at weekends, and I've seen them get on the deck, as we call it, the little fo'c's'le deck, because you never had anything round it, it was just, well she had a little top-streak round her, like about a nine-inch bulwark round of her, but a lot of them just had a little bit of tread-rail, about three inches, round them. But it was the knack of standing up there.

Yes, you just drift with the tide. Well, most of them like I say were mackerel boats, which would carry a hell of a lot of net. Basically, there was only two or three drifters, mackerel drifters, at the time, which was Teddy Gillam in the Alert, Jimmy Howell in his new boat, the Lady Rosemary, because he'd got a few better nets by then and the Popgun the last year, and Toby a couple of years before that. Well they would go away, just before dark, in about May and they would shoot these nets. Ted played it up the most, well it was his game.

Alan Hayes

Ted: I used to love mackerel-catching, I did. I was always the first one to fit out, as soon as May come I was fitted out. We used to work Shoreham first and then work down to Newhaven, but as the years went on we used to work out of Newhaven all the time, mackerel-catching, because you had to work the tides from Shoreham. You couldn't go out when you liked, you had to work the tides because it's a tidal harbour, down below the locks. And Newhaven's not, no, you could go in and out all day long. But sometimes, when I first was a boy, we went with my father first, and my brother, we used to have to get off the hard at Shoreham, when the tide was high enough, and lay alongside the west pier of Shoreham Harbour, tie up there. You could only go in nice breezes to catch mackerel, no good going in calm, you had to go when there was a nice little breeze westerly, or sou'west. It didn't matter if it was raining, you never counted that, it was just a matter of fact, that was, rain. It was the breezes. Because as I was saying Shoreham was a tidal harbour and sometimes you had to go over four or five o'clock, so you'd lay there till about seven or eight o'clock and then go to sea. The breeze lifted them up, brought 'em up to the surface.

Barbara: They used to call Ted the 'Mackerel Murderer'.

Ted: Because I used to have more nets than all the others.

Barbara: If the fish wasn't here they had to go round Rye you see, and they had to take the boat round Rye and they'd go in one of his mate's big lorries and live in that lorry for the week and then come back at the end of the week. It was a lonely time even though I had the kids, I mean you're still lonely. He used to do a lot of night fishing, well they don't do it now, they won't do it now. But Ted was, he was, well, what can I say - mad! But you were mad really 'cos you used to go out when it was blowy, he used to say to me, 'I'm going tonight if it blows the stars out the sky!'

'Big Ted' & Barbara Gillam

To go mackerel-catching you wanted a west berth and my granddad always made sure he had the west berth. When they were mackerel-catching they would always want to be out the sou'west. If my grandfather would come into the 'roads' and drop his fish in the morning, he wouldn't perhaps get to lay there if there was going to be a bit of a breeze. He would go out and anchor out off Lewgate, well out in the sou'west there, sometimes would be half a gale of wind, but he wouldn't go in harbour, he would still be out there. I would come down from school when I was at St. Mary Magdalene's, down Preston Street and come down to the West Pier, purposely to look out, and as I'm coming down the hill, I would probably be able to see them laying out there. Round about this time, about four o'clock, they would be getting up their anchors to go further out if the weather wasn't too bad, I mean they couldn't shoot in a gale of wind, but as long as there was a good breeze westerly, that was his mackerel breeze.

Steve Ovet

Ted: Well, when we was mackerel-catching we went out in some funny weather. You had to go out in funny weather with mackerel nets, to lift the mackerel up. So they'd go into the drift-nets. You could go calm and you wouldn't ... well, you'd get eight or ten mackerel sometimes. Calm. And yet if it was blowing a fine old breeze you'd get say thirty or forty stone, hundred stone. I've had a hundred and fifty or sixty stone, all like that. We'd go out in funny old weather, four or five, something like that. Force four, five, is a fine old breeze. Eight's a gale force, five or six, all like that. We used to go out in that. Sou'west is really a prevailing wind here. North-east wind was a nice wind, because the further off you got, the more bit of rough off the top you got, from under the lee of the cliffs up there, like a north-east wind, specially if it was a flood tide, it made it a bit more rough, didn't it? Because the tide against the wind made it a bit more curly. Good for mackerel, make 'em lift off the ground. Go in your nets. It didn't bother me, no. I used to go out in some funny weather.

Barbara: I used to think he was potty.

'Big Ted' & Barbara Gillam

You see the herring were no good until they'd swum up off the Isle of Man and off of Loch Fine, and consequently they rebuilt their flesh to such an extent, and it was very oily of course, and the Isle of Man and the Loch Fine fishermen used to fish for them to

make kippers - they were very famous kippers, Loch Fine and Isle of Man kippers, because of the fat content in them. They proceeded up the West coast of Scotland and through the Pentlands - the Scottish fleet used to follow them up with their wives and daughters ashore, gutting and splitting, packing and sorting - where they started to make their roe again, and by the time they got down off of Yarmouth and Lowestoft they were full-roed and they used to catch them for the famous Yarmouth Bloaters. But when they came off of Seaford Head, the local fishermen wanted to capture them before they'd shot their roe.

Joe Mitchell

They used to reckon that the herring would strike Brighton area on November the fifth, Guy Fawkes Night. The first boat that caught the herring, you would then find where the herring were drifting: it might be a mile from the coast, and it might be half a mile from the coast, or it might be three miles from the coast. So once the boat's found them they'd know where to find them, and they would follow those right the way down through the south coast down as far as Plymouth and Padstow and those sort of places. Then when the herring finished down there and went into the Irish Sea, the boats would turn round and come back again. They'd come back empty. They were drifting, they were using drift-nets to catch herring, nets which hang down as a sheet and the herrings swim into them, and they can't swim backwards so they get hung up in the gills.

John Leach

The luggers you see, like the Brighton boats, the Paragon, the Maggie and all them, they used to go trawling in the summer and mackerel fishing, that's drift-net fishing with mackerel, and herring-drifting in the winter up till Christmas time, they used to go herring-drifting. They used to lower the foremast down, so they only had the mizzen, just with the sail up, aft of the boat, to keep her head to sea.

Bob Holden

'Dummy' would go out with a small boat, he used to row out, and they used to put boxes of fish in and bring it back, and it was taken up onto the market hard, as they called it. He used to ferry the fish. He used to go out to the bigger boats, because they were at anchor, and the fish would all be boxed up on board, and he would bring it ashore, and we'd help to take it up the beach, because it was a long beach, all pebbles and all that, and he used to keep an eye on us to see that we didn't pinch any. He couldn't talk, he went, 'Ha hoo ha ha,' like that. That's how he used to speak. And the kids, they knew what he was like, and they used to sort of knock off these fish and he, we used to have a bit of fun with him, he'd pick up some pebbles and chuck them at you, to scare you off.

There used to be two luggers. They used to come out in the evening and pick up the crews. Dummy used to take them out, in the little boat, pick up the crew - because they used to have to anchor - and they'd pick up the crew and they'd go away for the night

fishing, and perhaps they'd not come back for a couple of nights, something like that. They'd go down right past Littlehampton, or back up the other way to Hastings. These were luggers, the bigger boats. It was herring-catching, herring nets. My dad used to start fishing at Folkestone, with Bob Leach's boats, and they'd fish right round the coast, because that's how the fish used to swim, see? The fish used to swim right round the coast, start in the North-East, and come down right down to Dover and the old man used to finish up at Plymouth, catching them, and when he got near Brighton, he'd come home nights and that, and stay at home for a while.

James Ward

There was a big gun there at the King Alfred in the war, the R.N.V.R. place. And that is, for all the fishermen, is the Gun. When we were in the Peace & Plenty, if we drove across the Gun, as we call it, Hove Street, with the nets, if you positioned yourself there it was as good a place as any. In the end all boats used to try and get on that one bit. That used to be where the herring were. Frank had a nice few herring in the old Surprise there, when I wasn't in her. He had three hundred stun two mornings running, which is enough.

Alan Hayes

I don't know whether it's well known or not, the Mizpah, which was my grandfather's and dad's boat, she still holds the record for the highest catch of herrings on the South Coast for drifting in one night and it will be never be beaten unless something drastic happens, because nobody now goes drifting all night at this day and age. They did this around about 1932, they had the highest catch, they had a 'last and half of herring. A last is ten thousand fish, and they spent all day bringing the fish home from Newhaven and in the finish they couldn't give them away, half of the fish finished up on the farms as manure or thrown away. At the Fishmarket there were piles and piles of herring on the market, it was terrible really, to see them thrown away at that particular time and as I say it took them all day to clear them. They didn't go to sea the next night, I don't think anyone went that night because it was no good going to sea. That was the largest catch ever known, on the South Coast in one night.

Steve Ovet

We used to call each other up on the radio and we used to say, 'How's it been, have you caught anything?' 'Well, no, it's been very slack.' Because you're fishing a few miles apart, like. Even if you were having a good catch, you wouldn't tell them that you was catching it, for the simple reason that if you told them - and they wasn't having anything - about ten minutes afterwards they would up their anchor and they would come and fish where you were. This is how it is, everybody's the same. They'd be a little bit independent, a little bit cagey about what they were doing. I expect it was the same in the years prior to the war. Even when we was herring-catching, you got all your nets in, and you'd probably got a good catch of herring, you might have forty to fifty stone of

herring in your boat, you know. And you're motoring back down the harbour and then passing one of the other boats that's still laying adrift there, you'd say, you know, holler out to them, 'How did you get on? "Hm, not much.' They've always all been the same.

Ted Watherington

Well, you see - when you're fishing and you're herring-catching in the little tiny fourteen-foot boats, all the while you're catching fish and you used to have the net in your hand all the time, you know what I mean, if ever you started to get cold you used to pull the nets in and when you got fish in the net, it seemed to warm you up. That was when it was worst, when you never got any.

Bobby Andrew

Frank was a bit apprehensive when I said we'd got a vicar coming with us, and I've explained to Frank that this is Richard the vicar and we go from there. And you didn't quite know if you was calling him Richard or Vicar or Vic for short. But we soon overcome the shyness part. With the vicar one night, in on Roedean - which was one of our favourite haunts for herring - we shoots the nets in, because we fancied the herring to be in a bit, in close, just clear of the rocks. We shot nice and early this night, and the inside end caught the ground, caught the rocks. So, oh blimey. Now you could ruin your fleet of gear, if you catch the rocks. You shoot down the wind normally. So if the wind was sou'west or southerly we would shoot in, you would shoot in towards the land; but this night we shot from the land out, and in close. So we've caught the ground. Oh dear, oh Gawd. Old cotton nets would just tear away, that one bit that caught the ground. But all-nylon nets, with lead-line along the bottom, you could do quite a lot of damage, and ruin your nets.

It was a lovely calm night, and it's still not, just about dark. So we've now mucked our shoot, or our drive up, you know, we call it driving with the tide. Well, we go in, and we think that we can just lift them off the rocks, just pull that little bit up, albeit it tears. We grab hold of the line, well, we pull it away and then a bit further up gets caught. So we said, 'Well, let's just pull this first couple of nets in.' Well, there wasn't a herring in these four or five nets, and we've now pulled them back the wrong way. We've pulled all the cork-line back, all over aft on the top of the deck, all by the windlass the wrong way around. So I said, 'Ah, well,' - oh right fed up, although we haven't done any damage, but no fish, it's now coming up six o'clock which was normally the time you would go to work, or to have a look-on anyway - so I said, 'Well, we'll have to take them in the harbour, pull them out on the quay, and then pull them back into the hold.'

I was very short-sighted there because Frank said, 'Well, let's go and shoot them now and pull them back like, and go and work them up and see what we get.' We went and shot just to get them out of the boat and to pull them back in the boat properly. Like I say, we had the vicar on board and we've shot the nets the other side, the wrong side of the boat. We've always sort of stated a bit from the Bible where Jesus said, 'Shoot your

nets on the other side.' Which is really not ethical because you would get them all round the propeller, in theory. But we did it this night. And we was all down dishearten because we hadn't got a herring the first time and it was just one of them nights that we weren't going to get anything. And of course we pulled them back and we got eighty stun, which was one of the luckiest lots to get. I mean you could you could have knocked us down with a feather.

Alan Hayes

Joe Leach was known as 'Smokey Joe'. Face was always black. These old fishermen, people used to say how dirty they was, but when you come to think about it, these boats, the bigger boats, they had their little old fire in the cabin, and they had a boiler, and you've got these two chimneys coming up out on deck just in front of the skipper who's steering the vessel, or whoever's steering it, and they're working around there, and there's all this smoke, all about face height, these two chimneys, they used to get black. And the poor blighters, when they was drifting they never had water enough to wash, because they only used to take a keg of water to sea with them, and they was always drinking tea, they never had water for washing. And on top of that how they got time to wash I don't know, because they'd come in here and sometimes they was up to dinner-time shaking the herrings out their nets and getting their nets back and unloading the herrings, because they used to come in loaded with herring. And no sooner had they got the nets back, they was off to sea again. Yes, they used to work hard while they could.

Bob Holden

Mackerel, see, you had to pick them out, you used to unhook 'em, out the net, then you'd chuck 'em aft in the boxes, we had all boxes all round her and all that, and filled 'em up, and if you had too many you used to have to leave 'em in the nets and clear 'em in the harbour. See, a mackerel you got to pick out, but herring, you can shake them out of a net, their gills are more pliable, you just shake them out, just catch them under the back of the gills. You never gutted mackerel or herring. They were sold as they were. The buyers what bought 'em used to have to either gut 'em or clean 'em. I mean, we never used to gut fish years ago. It was all daylight fishing, and night-time, straight into the market, here. Yes, real fresh. I done a bit of spratting and all, I had a few sprat nets, catch sprats. Nobody does that now. Catch them same as you did with the mackerel net, shoot 'em and drive with the tide. But a much smaller mesh. I think they've all gone now, I don't think there's a sprat about now. No, there's no sprat nets, I don't think there's anybody's got any sprat nets now.

'Big Ted' Gillam

The mackerel can't come in now. Too much of that washing machine stuff been in the water. Whitebait used to come up along the beach and you didn't dare catch it. You could send away and buy it but you couldn't sell it. Come right along the beach and so

did the mackerel but they don't come in there now 'cos the water's dirty. See at times when it blows you can see this murky water come right the way down from Shoreham like brown mud. From that silver buoy, years ago you could look over and you could see a crab crawling along the bottom. You go a couple of foot [now] and you can't see the bottom! So it must be all this water going down, washing-machines, fridges, everything else, and I think that's what has caused all the trouble. See there's no bait for 'em. They used to come along the beach, you could shovel them up. You didn't dare catch 'em or somebody'd split on you, but you could go up London and buy 'em but you mustn't touch 'em. But you don't see the mackerel coming now.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

The trawling - basically in the punts, as we call them, the beach boats - was in the autumn time and a little bit in the spring. Some used to go, the likes of Georgie Gillam and that, used to go trawling in the summer, but then usually they caught the bus over to Newhaven, the last bus we'll say, or the one before dark, do their couple of hauls trawling and get their bait to do their pots in the morning, which was like four o'clock daylight, or three o'clock daylight, do their pots and be back in time to catch like the bus in with their few lobsters or what have you.

Alan Hayes

Fishing down here was mostly accomplished by trawlers, and trawlers of course have the boards to hold the net open and they tow it along, and as the boards are on an angle the water hits the boards and shears them off, and by shearing them off holds the net open. As the boat travels along at about seven or eight knots it collects the fish in the nets - that's trawling.

Johnny Humphrey

Trawling, you was there all day or all night, you was putting backwards and forwards, your trawl went down on the bottom of the sea bed and you was towing it, with the boats. Yeah, we had plaice, used to get plaice, soles, dogfish, huss, skate. That was the main catch, for down here, like.

Ted Watherington

Here it is a mixed fishery, I mean a trawler doesn't set off with the intention of catching one specific species. His net, once he shoots away, of course it could be shrimps sometimes, sometimes plaice about, or by the same token in that net there could be some whiting still there after the winter season, and there could be the odd cod and sole, so it is a mixed fishery.

Jimmy Howell

Well, in the trawlers, when they used to go trawling, they used to catch sole, plaice, skate, whiting, or whatever was on the bottom - crabs, lobsters and all that, and mackerel; but when we used to go up Seaford Bay, what we went up there mostly for was for bass and mullets and soles. You'd get the occasional plaice and some of that in Seaford Bay, you know.

Bobby Andrew

Also there was soles, and you used to get a lot more soles, live soles, in your trammel nets, and trawling you used to get the small mediums, you know, because you used be putting that trawl across the sea bed and that which, if you were on a nice bit of sandy bottom, you used to get your soles that way. They call them Dover soles, from down this end because they had a light brown back, white underbellies. But that's working from Shoreham, east. We worked out of Shoreham, also off the beach. Just depended on how the days, or how the weather was. If it was a little bit nasty as regarding getting back on the beach and that, you worked out of Shoreham. But if it was fine, [you] used to bring the boats back on the beach. Onto Brighton beach.

Ted Watherington

We never hardly saw any cod. I remember after the war, my father had a boat built for him, the Alert, and we fished from Rye. And we was fishing from Rye and we all made up our mind, all the boats what was Brighton boats, to come home to fish in Brighton again. So we was motoring out of Rye and one of the fellows says, 'Go on Ted, you go up ahead, you're faster than us,' and we had a haul with the trawl so we had a bit of fish to take home, and our boat went like and we got the trawl over just off of Seaford Head, towed up to the harbour and the boats was just going into Newhaven then, they'd caught us up like. And we got the trawl up. And I'll always remember, we had a cod in it about eighteen inches, two foot long. And, we goes in, and all the fellows, all the fishermen had come down to share this bit of fish out to take home, and they said, 'Where did you get that from then?' You know. It was a few years after the war that they started catching cod, because I tell you that one we caught that time, they all marvelled at it. And yet they talk about cods now as though they've always been here, but as I say, that was a wonderful thing to them, to see a cod.

'Big Ted' Gillam

The soles are the big money, or the fish that fetches money, and within reason you catch more soles of a night than you do of a day, by trawling. So you obviously have to go nights, trawling. Well, we were only day boats, meaning that we just went for the day or just for the night, and in the Peace & Plenty and the other boats I had we used to go a couple of hours before dark. Go trawling for the night and be back by daylight or just after daylight the next morning, to make sure the trawl was on the bottom throughout the night, you know, to maximise the dark to catch these soles.

But then, of course, in the spring you went in the daytime, because you were catching plaice, there weren't any soles about in the early spring. And funnily enough there were soles about when we put our trammels in, in April, but people tried it, and we tried it on odd occasions, that you would catch these soles in these trammels but you wouldn't catch them trawling. People wore gloves trawling. Most of our stuff was rope, but you generally had thick rubber gloves. I think what it was, you couldn't pick out fish and weed with these thick rubber gloves on. Obviously gloves have got a lot better now. But I've seen the old 'uns come home with all their fingertips bleeding, nearly every fingertip, with picking husses out.

Alan Hayes

Another story 'Old Stomper' told me about him, was that they used to take people out when they went fishing for love, like, and these people used to pay the fishermen to go with them. These people who came down from London were called 'toffs' by the fishermen. They were called that because they had a few bob I suppose, anyway the fishermen would take them out and the toffs would stay with them until they came back in. At this particular time, my great-grandfather had a boat called the Band of Hope, one of the old hog-boats, and the nickname for those, without being rude, was 'knockarses' because they used to 'knock up' on the beach. Anyway they were lying out there for a couple of days, nearly right out in the Channel, it was calm as they had no wind to tow the trawl because you see it was all sails in those days, so they just had to lay there and then a gale of wind came in from the south-west and these two toff blokes started to get a bit worried. They said to my great-grandfather, 'Don't you think we ought to go in, old father?' His reply was, 'Go in? We've been lying out here two days and nights, now there's a breeze you want to go in! I'll tow the buggar until, till her bloody topsail goes underwater!' So there you are, that was the sort of bloke he was!

Steve Ovet

When my father was at sea trawling in Boys Own I used to get up early, about five o'clock, get down to the beach waiting for them to come ashore and help them winch the boat up and get the fish to market. I was rewarded with a bit of fish to take home for my mother to sell to the neighbours to get food for breakfast and such before I went to school. My father took me on this trip for one purpose, that was to try to make me give up fishing for a living. We left Shoreham Harbour on the fifth of November and when we were about one mile out you could see all the South Coast ablaze with electric lights and bonfires - what a wonderful sight to see. As it was too calm to shoot the nets for herring, we got the trawl ready for flat fish.

Edward Pierce

In the Peace & Plenty we actually never went out further than the Palace Pier one night and got one of the best night's work we've ever got. And for perhaps the whole of the autumn the fish used to be in close along the shore and we wouldn't go out back of a

mile and a half, for perhaps two months of trawling. Obviously the boats were very limited in their horsepower; I mean you wouldn't get a living in them now, but to fish out what we call longshore - I mean we call it out longshore, or outside, which is on the three mile sort of thing - that was about the limit that you could go in our boats, trawling. If you were talking you would say outside and inside ground, or, you know, you'd drop inside or you'd drop outside, or out clear, meaning out clear of the rocks.

Alan Hayes

As I said, I come from two different families. See, my mother's side was seiners, but my father's side were longshoremen: they used to go trawling, trawlers. See, the longshoremen here was using eighteen-foot boats, twenty or forty-foot boats like my father had. My father had one was about forty or fifty-foot. They couldn't come in on the beach 'cos they were too big. They used to go in Newhaven or in Shoreham. But when the boats was fishing, they used to go out of a night and come in in the morning and they used to use those two main ports, Shoreham and Newhaven. The only time they used to come in here, they always used to come in and anchor their boats in between the two Piers, all the fishing boats, so that they was home, and they used to come ashore and have a change and a bath and all that. Then they used to go down of an evening and one of the fellas who was on the beach had a small row boat, he used to ferry them out to the boats and then they would go fishing.

Bobby Andrew

Jimmy Howell and the likes of them would look at it at twelve o'clock of a night and if the wind dropped away they'd go trawling. Which you earned your money between the breezes, because if it's breezy weather it would probably drop of a night and pick up again by dinnertime. And Frank lived on the seafront, in Bedford Street, where a lot of the fishermen lived, and quite a lot of nights - or a lot of mornings - our thing was to go away early in the morning. Anyway, he would phone me at, we'll say four o'clock, half past three: 'The wind's dropped.' I would be down his house and on the boat within a half-hour and because of the Marina the trawl would be on the bottom and fishing within the hour of him phoning me, which if you had to go to Shoreham, and lock out and all that, would have been three hours. Well, I'm not going to say we done right well but we done reasonably well there, by just going between gales of wind and between breezes, just snatching a few hours before the wind came up.

Alan Hayes

Oh, I used to love going out. Oh yeah, I loved going out, I did. Well, it was our living really, you know, it was your living but you still enjoyed what you was doing. Because when you got your trawl up you never know what you were going to get in it, do you? It wasn't exciting, but you know, you always hope for the best, don't you? What they call the cod-end, that's where the fish used to go down the bottom end of the trawl. And on the side of it we had what we called pockets. The trawl was shaped like that, inwards,

and the pockets run in that way so the fish, when they went down the cod-end, if they swum up, they'd go up the side and they'd go up in these pockets. That's where you always got any soles, they was always up in the pockets of the trawl.

'Big Ted' Gillam

It's very exciting. And you're always optimistic. Oh well, maybe it wasn't very good this day, it'll be better the next time you shoot. I remember one occasion we were hauling and I saw a lot of white coming up and the nets were very heavy and, 'Oh great, this looks good.' The catch was two hundred and forty bloody cuttlefish which are not worth a toss. And two weeks later I saw advertised in the Argus someone willing to buy cuttlefish!

Peter Richards

They used to be a bit dubious of each other, one way or the other. They were fishing at night-time, say, for instance, you'd been out the night before and you had a good catch of soles, which we did have at one time, and you went in the market the next morning, and they say, 'Ooh, where did he get those nice soles?' Like, 'Oh, we'll follow them tonight.' They would never say anything, but they would try and follow you out, when you come out the harbour. What we used to do! When we used to come out the harbour, used to go out so far, course it was dark, winter-time fishing, you used to get out the harbour with your lights going up, and no sooner you got out on the open sea, you used to switch your lights out, and they didn't know where you was gone to! A lot of them used to do that, night-time. If you knew that they was catching fish, you'd say, 'Well, we'll go and have a basinful of their whatsername, what they caught last night.' But you wouldn't catch them because the thing was that as they got out the harbour they used to motor outside and switch the light out, and course, you couldn't see anything on the water. It was absolutely pitch black.

Ted Watherington

Of course, we used to do a lot of night fishing, which they don't do now. We used to go about an hour before dark and away you go. You had all your little bits of ground what you knew, what other people didn't know, so you never had no lights up! Oh, my father, he wouldn't let you show a light, he wouldn't. No, because we had little bits of ground what we knew, what nobody else knew, we used to do well on it, you'd go and have two or three hauls there and then before daylight come you'd go somewhere else, and they'd think you'd been there all night like! We had all our different marks, you know, to go trawling and that. And different lights on the front you picked up, when you fished it. And you never tell 'em it you know, because they'd follow you, wouldn't they, all like that. And you only had one light in the boat. And you'd only put that up when you was on your own or when the other boat was coming down on you, otherwise you put it in a case, and you used to work in the dark. But as I say, for a fishing mark that was, because the Pier had their lights on, didn't they, you knew where the Pier was because

there was always a light on the Pier end. But it's what they used to say, 'Old Ben's Lights clear of the Palace Pier,' you could tow in there and that was a nice bit of ground, what you used to catch a bit of fish on. If we went out three mile it was as much as we ever went out. But we used to like fishing right on the edge of the beach because you could get these, what we used to call the big plaice, the chuckles, on that rough ground and that, in the fall of the year. Just out from the beach.

'Big Ted' Gillam

My grandmother's brother, my dad's Uncle Gillam was with him and my grandfather's brother, Dick Ovet, they were in a boat - I think the John and William - and they were catching a nice lot of thornbacks out off Selsey, they had a nice bit of fish. They came in with the fish, landed it in the roads, went out again, and started fishing during the day for those thornbacks. While they were fishing, they saw this Frenchman coming in towards them. When they were trawling, if the boat was light, they used to have this pig-iron for ballast down in the boat to keep her steady, to keep her stern down so she wouldn't lift up with the trawl. So my grandfather said to these two, 'Look you two, go below and get a couple of lumps of that pig-iron up and one for me.' They asked why and my grandfather replied, 'Get them up here and I'll show you what they're for when you get them up.' They got the pig-iron on deck. My grandfather said, 'Now when that Frenchman comes closer, if he puts a boat down, when he comes alongside to board us,' he said, 'we drop that pig-iron straight down through that boat's bottom.' Luckily for those Frenchmen they never came alongside, they kept a boat's distance away and shouted out if they had any water, and my grandfather and his crew told them in their garbled English, French to go away and they went away.

Steve Ovet

The Leach's as a family used to own three big trawlers: the Bob Leach, the Little Old Lady, and the Boy Eric, and they used to fish continuously. They were mainly trawling and, as I say, some of the crews used to work in them in the winter, some of the local fisherman used to go and crew for them but they packed up in about '55 or '56. With the demise of old Bob Leach, who was the father, he owned the boats at the time, they did disappear. That was the end really of any big boats. Then after that the big trawlers started to appear but really they weren't tied up with any of the big families. Then Peter Leach, who got Brighton Fish Sales over at Shoreham, he went into it and he started to buy one or two bigger trawlers. They do now own beam trawlers, up to about eighty-foot long and quite powerful boats that do travel all around the coast fishing.

Dave May

All that's gone now, there's no drifters there's no trawlers down here, it's all trammel-netting all the time now. That's all they do, trammel-netting, all of them do that.

'Big Ted' Gillam

This seine net fishing, there used to be, there used to be boats on all the beaches stretched from the Banjo Groyne, back of the Peter Pan, and they used to stretch right the way down to Shoreham Church. We used to know each other; well you had to didn't you? You'd know all their names and that. You have a fourteen-foot boat, and you have a net in it. Just one boat, and there used to be six of you, six men. You had six nets and each net was forty-two yards so you had about two hundred, three hundred yards of net; and you used to shoot it on the beach whichever way the tide was going and then you shoot it down with the tide. One couple of men used to stand on the beach and hold the rope in, on the beach, and the other four used to shoot the boat out and round in a half-circle round the beach. And then they used to put it together, and then pull it in on the beach.

Bobby Andrew

What they call seining, that's shooting the net out from the shore and pulling the net in, although they used to do it also at sea with a mother ship and a small ship taking the net round, and pull on the ground rope - they called that a 'tuck net'. But when you consider that when the Russians were fishing off the West Country for mackerel, their seine, where the smaller ship took the other one out, was sixty fathom deep - that's a hundred and eight feet deep - and nine miles long, where they captured the whole shoal and suffocated them. Thin mesh, that's what's destroyed them. Where they'd brought [the mackerel] ashore, where they'd fed on the whitebait - because they're ravenous feeders - their stomachs became distended, and the sand acts like sandpaper and bursts the stomach. Well, they weren't actually rotten or deteriorated so consequently they had to be sold quick, otherwise they would have deteriorated rapidly.

Joe Mitchell

It was hard. Well, it all depends. It was easy work if there wasn't a lot of weed about. See, it was no good going shooting the net certain times of the year when what we call, what we used to call the 'summer slab': it's like a bluey mixture, always comes every year in the warm weather and it floats around in the water. And you used to shoot the net in that and when you got a net full of that it used to hold all the meshes together and the water wouldn't go through, so it made it hard. But as a rule, you generally used to get the - after a gale or wind - you used to get a load of flakeweed, you know, big weed and all that in the net, and that made it hard as well. Instead of shooting what we call a wide net then - like I said, shooting it out and round in an half-circle - what we used to do years ago was just shoot it out in a long narrow oblong so that you never covered so much width and you never had so much weed.

We used to go all times. We used to leave the Brighton Fishmarket and we used to go down on top of the tide, and have the full strength of the tide down, and it used to take us about hour and half to get down to Shoreham Harbour. If we went to Lancing, it used to take us two and half hours. You had to do something for a living then. We used to go

down on the tide, fish, and then we used to come back on the tide. A lot of the seining people, they used to have them fish barrows. See, they used to go round in the daytime with the barrow with a bit of fish on and then when they'd finished of an afternoon, they used to go away fishing in the evening for five or six hours. So if they couldn't get a living one way or a few shillings one way, they got it the other way. That's if everything come right. Not like today. Oh it was hard, but they got on, they never used to say much. There was only one time they used to have arguments, when you were seining and you was waiting on the beach, say for a lot of mackerel, so you could shoot the seine round 'em, and then another one of 'em would try and beat you to it; you know, you're laying there and then another one come and beat you to it, and then there used to be a few words said between one another, you know what I mean? I think I was about one of the last to go seining. I think the last seining I done was in about 1972 or '73. That was the last time I went.

Bobby Andrew

Well, beach seining sort of died out. When I was a kid there was three or four boats up east, three or four boats between the Piers, well three at least, that was the Andrewses, Noakesy, Tinky Horman had one, Tommy Markwick, Dicky Taylor, they all had seines in these boats and it was the thing, that all the mackerel come along the shore in June in shoals, you've probably seen them, jumping and beating the water. Well, you rowed out with this net, again it sounds very simple, you row out round them and pull them ashore, and then sell them on the beach as they were. It's about the oldest form of fishing there is, I think. It is mentioned in the Bible. But again you see it's not as simple as it sounds, because you have to have your net stowed the right way round to make the circle so it doesn't go foul. Invariably you're waiting for the mackerel, you've seen them, they've showed once and gone down and you're laying there waiting, and you're all ready on the right side of them, with the net the right way round to shoot we'll say from east to west, just for the manner of speaking, and all of a sudden they come up the other side of you, you've got to make your mind up whether you can shoot a back net as they call it, and be very careful that it doesn't go foul, bearing in mind you're generally in a great haste to get round them before they disappear again, or you've got to hedge your bets and take your rope ashore and row up the other side of them, and then hope that they stay there or don't move back down to where they've come. This is why I think all the seiners was a little bit doolally. It's to do with the lead-line and the corks. If you shoot a back net your lead-line would run over the top of your cork-line and then it would be foul, so you could encircle the amount of fish, the shoal of fish, and you pull it in and then you find that your lead-line has flopped over your cork-line and it's gone foul and all the fish has gone out. They'd only have to find a hole or a bit of a gap and you'd lose most of them.

Alan Hayes

Grandfather and my father got the word of a massive shoal of mackerel in between the groynes on Paston Beach and consequently, accompanied by members of the

Humphrey's family, rowed the seine boat around from the Lift stade. Having shot around the shoal the seine was so full my grandfather decided it best that they wait until the tide ebbed before gathering in the catch. Grandfather left my father and others to tend the net while he went off, intending to go to the local pub for a glass or two of ale. He got half-way. up Paston Place steps and stood surveying the situation and soon realised that the catch had made its escape through a gap in the net, through the crew not hassling the mackerel by throwing stones around the seine's southernmost perimeter to drive them away from the net and towards the beach. He marched down and, though he never ever swore, told the crew in no uncertain terms that they had lost the catch and then departed to drown his sorrows.

Jimmy Howell

We shot the boat out, two sixty-fathom lengths of line each side, and when we was pulling it in, the mullets was jumping over the rope! There was so many in there, God knows how many. And my son walked out in the water, up to his armpits, and held the net up, and the mullets was going over the cork-line, over the lay-line, like greyhounds, like rockets shooting over the top. See, where you catch mullets, what they do down in Cornwall, they fish from the beach, and when they shoot the net they have two boats, one boat shoots the net and the other one's got an haystack in the boat. Yes, straw, haystack. As the boat's shooting the net, the other boat's coming in behind chucking straw in the net. And know what it's for? To stop them jumping over. You think I'm pulling your leg, don't you? No, that's true!

Bobby Andrew

They are really fifty-four foot cruiser stern trawlers. They adapt for seine net fishing, which was a fishing implemented by the Danish and came into force in the late thirties, and an immense amount of rope was used, therefore you used to have a rope-coiler aboard of them. And you'd probably shoot about fifteen coils of rope, that's one hundred and twenty fathoms to a coil, so you can imagine the amount of rope that goes out. And then you shoot the net. And then you shoot another fifteen coils of rope back to the boat again. And the theory is - and it works too, it's not only a theory, it works in practice - as you begin to pull them in, the ropes get closer together and in getting closer together they rake the bed of the sea, and the fish swim up but they don't go through the cloud of sand, they accumulate in the centre. And as they accumulate in the centre the net comes along and catches them, because you're steaming all the time, not standing still. So you're coiling the ropes in and steaming at the same time, at about two or three knots which is about walking pace. And as the fish swim into the centre of the channel so the net comes along and collects them. That was the theme that was started by the Danish people, the Norwegians and the Danish and the Swedish, and it worked very well. We tried it, we used to fish in the English Channel, we tried it out in the English Channel but we found that the tides were too strong in many instances, and it wasn't so successful as it was when you're in the open area of sea which you've got off of Scotland, and the North Sea generally.

John Leach

Lobster-potting, it's seasonal, yes, we only get seven or eight weeks really, June, July time, and a couple of weeks in August. That's it really. Eight to ten weeks, I suppose.

Andrew Gillam

Yeah, we used to go potting, lobstering, in the summer. Go over the harbour early of a morning, and come down here to go tripping, [Elsie] would have to come down, take the lobsters up Gowers, North Road. Then come up home and get the lunch, then we'd have a scoff on the beach. We used to wait for her to come down the slope with the grub and then Tubby and all them used to raid her sandwiches.

'Rachel' Leach

Lobster fishing grounds extend virtually throughout the district to as far east as Pevensey Bay, and edible cancer crabs to some six miles south and east of Hastings. In addition, to the west, there are oyster and cockle beds in Chichester Harbour, and large quantities of periwinkles can be found on any rocky area adjacent to the low water mark throughout the district. The season for the periwinkle commences on fifteenth of September and closes on fifteenth of April, both days inclusive, and during the season many tons are gathered by the pickers every year.

Jimmy Howell

Prawning, winkling, in the winter we used to go winkling. When I was at junior school, there used to be a fishing-tackle shop, Butlers in Black Lion Street, which was my playground, before I was allowed onto the beach. I used to be along Prince Albert Street and Black Lion Street and Ship Street, which was all in the same block, you didn't have to cross the road. Consequently I met up with Alan from the fishing-tackle shop. Well, a little bit later on we used to buy one peeler crab, like an angler now would buy a dozen, with one piece of line with one hook or two hooks, and we used to walk up to Black Rock swimming pool groyne, and catch these wrasse, and I was only very small. We never used to keep them, we used to just throw them back, but that was real sport and perhaps you just about saved your money, you had to walk one way or the other, because you'd spent your money to buy a crab which was tuppence.

Alan Hayes

When we was fishing with pots and that, whelk-pots and stuff, and we've had our small boat which we was using for potting and that, on the beach, and when we had hard gales of wind we couldn't get off the beach to go and get your pots. You had to wait till the weather calmed down before you could go off. Always best to have a harbour berth, the boat was always afloat. It was alright inside the harbour, but as soon as you put

your nose out into the open sea, and that, it was a bit rough, you'd get a little bit wet! Get a little bit bumped about. But other than that the fishing was - well, it wasn't bad, it was bad at times - off seasons and that, and it was good at times.

Ted Watherington

Most of the lobster-pots were made by people who made the wicker chairs, and baskets and things like that, but the other ones were made by the lobster-potters themselves as you've got to realise they never had a lot of money, they couldn't send away for anything, it was all make do and mend. They made the pots, with square bottoms and made the ends with a large opening with a small exit to come out and then with a net over the top. As you realise, a lobster comes out by flapping its tail so he comes out backwards and there is no way for him to get out once he's in.

Steve Ovet

There's another quite famous family in Brighton, which was the Hazelgrove family. It's only my opinion, it's not a fact, but to the west of West Street, which was around about the Regency Square area, they used to have fields of hazel, groves of hazel, and they used to grow their own hazel to make their lobster and crab pots there.

Joe Mitchell

Roger: They're funny creatures, fish, especially salt-water fish, a lot of them won't live in captivity. You can't make 'em grow.

Queenie: No, not like the salmon and the trout.

Roger: Yes, that's why down the Marina they was going to have all these lobster farms and mussel farms and crab farms and God knows what, but the creatures won't live naturally. And for crabs and lobsters, you can't beat having them straight out the sea. Because once they've been put in a cage and kept, they starve themselves. And, as you know, all their flesh is inside them, while our flesh is outside our bones. Course when you get home and open it up, out comes all the water, you've got nothing there. But I still carry on the tradition with my crabs and lobsters, they're straight out the sea. And I still cook them myself. I don't know of many fishmongers now that do actually do their own cooking, the winkles and the whelks and God knows what.

Roger Harding & 'Queenie' Foster

You fished, well, from anywhere in the Channel and that, you got charts - Admiralty charts, used to come from the Trinity House whatsername, and the sea beds were being charted up, and you more or less were, working off of a chart, and you more or less knew what we used to call kind ground and rough. And if you was working rough ground you used to work rough ground with those trammel nets, because then you

wasn't putting them across them. But if you was on more or less kind ground and that, you used to do trawling, used to be trawling with it, see.

Ted Watherington

In those days they didn't have any echo-sounding gear or all this lark, they just had to go with the water, keep his eye on the water to see what he thought, 'Oh, looks as though there's a bit of disturbance,' and, 'Right, we'll shoot here,' and that was it. The tides in the Channel, the flood tide flows from west to east and the ebb tide flows from east to west and there is a little bit more ebb than flow. Then you get the change, otherwise you would have the same times each day, you have a little bit more one way more than the other. Then you get the dead tides and the big tides like at the end of February and the March runners and the real high tides at the end of February.

Steve Ovett

These days it's all Decca or G.P.S. for navigation. You get on the boat and just push it in like a computer and it takes you where you want to go. You put a tape in it and it gives you all your positions where you're going to trawl. It's like playing on the Pier with one of the cars when you're driving up between two lanes, it's as simple as that. Years ago you used to purely use all the landmarks. The main ones were the Seven Sisters, they used to call them 'shraves', and they used to use the hills over the back of Lewes and places like that on the Downs as marks. They used to use the 'Long Nose' which was Lewes hill, that used to be the mark, which is Firle Beacon actually. That was one of the marks that they used on the shraves or if you go the other side of Shoreham we used to use Chanctonbury Ring and all the different hills and fields there. These days anyone who can read a Decca you can go and do the same thing; it used to take generations for people to learn. In one way it's made fishing easier but, then again, it's caused the overfishing because anyone can go and do it.

Dave May

You had the breakwater, you had the East Pier light and the West Pier light. And the West Pier light always used to change colours because of the depth of the water. And when a steamer was coming in they'd change it over for a white light for to coast her up the harbour, but if there was something coming down the harbour they'd have a red light up on the watch house, so they'd stop any coming in so the other one would have room to go out. And we had all them kinds of lights to work from. You know where the lift is on the front, there was two red lights on that, that was the main marker. And then down the bottom of Bedford Street, on the left-hand side, there's a triangle, of lights. I don't know if they light up now, but that was Old Ben's Lights. That was my grandfather, old Ben Allen. It was right where all the boats used to come ashore and heave up, that was the mark for them. And as I've told you, when we shifted along further, they put a red light up on one of the main lights along the front, that was for us, well, opposite our ... the old

hand-crank we used to have to heave up on. That was our light. And the triangle was for my grandfather. All the fishermen used to call it Old Ben's Lights.

We used to work a lot from Newhaven, and the Buckle, the Buckle Inn on the Seaford seafront, that was a mark for towing up clear of some rocks, that was, you kept your net and you could go right up to the breakwater at Newhaven, with that light. Clear of the breakwater. It's surprising how many marks you had of a night. You know, different lights you knew.

'Big Ted' Gillam

My family operated from immediately opposite the lift in Brighton, which was a fishing station, and on each corner of the second promenade there is a lamp standard and the glass to the seaward side of the lamp standard was red. I think it has gone now because I am told they have taken the fishing lights away, the fishing station lights. And at Bedford Street it was a triangle of lights which is still up on there now. If you find the second promenade and look up as you come down the small steps from Bedford Street you can see the triangle still there. And you had the same sort of fishing station lights at the old Fishmarket and again at West Street. The lights, especially those at Bedford Street, referred to as Old Ben's Lights, were used to help the small trawlers navigate around the rocks and wrecks. For example, there is a wrecked wartime bomber on the sea bed some three miles south of Shoreham, and by simultaneously pinpointing Old Ben's Lights, and the Shoreham Lighthouse over the eastern harbour arm, one could navigate around it and fish adjacent to the rocks running east-northeast to Black Rock.

Jimmy Howell

The inshore marks tended to be quite small and you had to be specific. Fishing off that beach, just beside the groyne at Peter Pan's, the marks, which were the various spots for fishing, were quite close together, within two miles of the shore, but you had to be quite specific how you got on those marks. And these marks were carefully kept secrets by guys that used to fish off that beach, and, well, along to the piers. But sometimes they would give you a bit of information, which you stored carefully, and these marks, if you could get spot on them, they were very, very good. There was one mark, I think it was called Sussex Square, which meant that you got the church in West Street, which was a little, stumpy steeple church half-way down West Street, you got that over one of the minarets on the Winter Garden at the Pier, the Palace Pier. You then got a church at the back of Kemp Town, I think it was St. Mark's, over the third or fourth house in Chichester Terrace. We've caught, let me think now, we've caught plaice, dogfish, mackerel, codling, whiting, dabs, on that one mark in the same place on the same day. It was rocks amongst sand. And as I say you had to be spot on, if you overshot by twenty or thirty metres you wouldn't catch much at all.

Peter Richards

You carried a compass on board - but you more or less knew where you were - you weren't fishing like thirty, forty miles off of the coast, and that, we knew all the marks, the landmarks. Night-time, you had your lights on the shore, and that, and used to know the marks from the lights and that. Either East, West or North.

Ted Watherington

All my fishing, trawling, was all done by landmarks along the shore. We hadn't got to the dizzy heights of radar or Decca in them days. I wish I had the sounder that I've got in my little boat now, and radar and Decca, or this G.P.S. what it is now. And I think that would have made a great deal of difference because it was a little bit judging everywhere, and we used to fish round the rocks. And we played it up to fish round the rocks because you thought if you could pull down on the sand and catch one box of fish, you could pull round tight to the rocks and gradually more and more over the rocks, or as much as you could get away with it and you would get twice as much fish. So obviously that was our game and it was more interesting.

But we all used marks and even the old sailing boats used marks. The hills over the background, over the back of Lewes, back of Seaford actually, were one of the marks of how far you were out on the trammel ground. And this all like I say stems from years ago and it was how we basically fished. We mentioned streets because you could look straight up streets, especially Hove where they were like built sort of north and south, the streets, or the north and south streets like First Avenue, Second Avenue. Well, to go round Ship Rock you could get to Holland Road and you could pull out, what we would call pulling out, you could go out clear of Holland Road and come down back of Ship Rock. But if you was anywhere east of Holland Road you would catch Ship Rock and do a lot of damage and couldn't get your trawl up. So it was basically all landmarks when we went fishing. I think all the art seems to have gone out of it a little bit now.

Alan Hayes

What killed the fishing industry in this country was when we lost the Icelandic War. That was the finish of it. Because those fishing skippers, they had the knowledge then, and when the fish was there. They didn't have these echo-sounders and Deccas and all that, they used to keep a book of where they was fishing, where they caught the best catches at different times of the year, and they used to go there and fish. The skippers, yes, keep a record in a book. Keep a log, like you do on a boat. They knew where they had the best catches.

They passed it down through the family. Just like a book. Like a Bible in the family, you keep the Bible in the family, you pass it down through the family; and that was the same in a fishing family in them boats. When they lost the Icelandic War, they couldn't go fishing there, all what they'd learnt over a period of years, it was finished, wasn't it? That was the downfall of this country.

Bobby Andrew

Most of the boats by Christmas used to be laid up, pulled up on the beach at Brighton. The boats would be done up and serviced for the next season and they'd leave and go to work. The majority of us, we used to work for the Post Office. A lot of us used to work up Brighton Station driving mail-bags about or in various areas. You'll find most of the older chaps had to do it. We all used to do it for about three weeks. In them days you used to sign on as a fisherman, as a share fisherman you'd got the right to do, and go and sign on till the season started again at the end of the month. These days they've got various means, share fishermen or part-time, they can go and sign for odd days. In them days we never used to, it was more of a seasonal job then, as a share fisherman we used to sign on for the season but these days they've altered the laws, you can sign for odd days. If you don't go to sea for so many consecutive days you can go and sign. In the old days most of the fishermen never used to bother.

Dave May

I used to have a job as a milkman, first thing in the morning; I used to start at half past five in the morning and I was done every day at half past one, two o'clock, and all the rest of the day was my own. I used to go off fishing afternoons and evenings, go home about ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, get up and go to work the next day. In the fifties, as I told you, we used to work up the Theatre Royal and go and do the evening show.

Bobby Andrew

In those days [the 1950s] ninety percent of them here were fishermen, back stage, being a hemp theatre. Oh, one particular show, we were getting in, it was on a Sunday afternoon, and one of the boys appeared from the beach and said, 'They're showing up,' which means the mackerel are shoaling. So we left a skeleton staff there, the rest went down, did all the fishing, left two down there to sell it, and we come back up and finished off putting the show up. And the show still went on Monday night as usual.

At one time we had about eighteen in the flies. The upper flies as well were manned, with the scenery, because it being a hemp theatre, it was all rope naturally, pulling this and lifting that, all manually. If it was what we call a standing show where there was only the tabs required, at the interval and the final curtain, it would be nothing for them to bring a couple of nets up and mend them up here, to pass the time away.

Oh, fish! It was like a fishmarket at times back there. Several of the artistes, once they were in the circuit, said, 'Don't forget Brighton, to get the fish, on your way back.' Sir John Mills's wife used to make a beeline for me on the Monday and order her prawns for the Saturday to take back to the London flat.

And as I say with regards to the theatre side of it, the working side, if it wasn't for the fishermen I don't think half the scenery would have gone on. Because there was always

fishermen waiting to come up here to do a day's work, after they'd been fishing all night. My Uncle Jim, he used to be in the flies, he had the boat called the Mizpah, one of the luggers. My father [Wally Sinden] never worked here because he was at sea most of the time. And his boat was the Shades of Evening, another lugger, with a crew of five. And at one time we had, I think, about ten Andrews, all brothers, cousins, all working here at the same time. And one was the chief electrician, which was George, sorry to say he's dead and gone now. And as I say it'd be nothing for them, if it blew hard, to bring their nets up here, standing show, and mend 'em, and that. Nothing was ever said, pass the time away.

Jim Sinden

Well, he was on there regular, Jimmy Sinden. And they had proper people what work of a day going doing of a night. But if there was any afternoon matinees, they used to like the likes of me and my mate, we used to have to go down there and help to pull the scenery away. What they call up in the flies. We used to just go and help out on that, just for, well, I think we used to get about half a crown, something like that, for the afternoon. Only during the matinees, on the Wednesday afternoon. Lifting the scenery up and down, yeah. Hard work? No, we didn't use to take much notice of it. Used to get half a crown for that, for the afternoon. No, there were no fisherman working in the evenings, no, they had to go fishing of a night.

'Big Ted' Gillam

John: I think you'll find it, if you was to come to the Marina and see people, like myself, Andrew and me other brother and there's probably two other people who actually do fishing full-time, out of the Marina. The rest of them that have come into the game, you know, have sort of not come from a fishing family. When things get a little bit hard, we have to persevere, but they leave and go and do jobs, you know, get a job on the building or plumbing or whatever they do. That is the only way I can put it. I think you're either into it full-time, or you're not, you know.

Andrew: I think it's more seasonal with us, there's no seasons with the big boats, just with the small boats, you still do your fishing to the seasons, your trammelling now and

...

John: Yeah, but we've got to emphasise, it's not like it used to be. They used to be very strict on seasons. When Dad was trammelling, I think it was the first of May, wasn't it?

Andrew: I don't know, I don't remember.

John: They used to have to bring their trammel nets in, because the drifter boats, they started drifting for mackerel, and that was how strict the season was. Now we don't do any of that.

John & Andrew Gillam

Any true fisherman is away before yachtsmen are there. We used to plan to be back on a Sunday morning if we could, it didn't always work but, to be back before all the

yachtsmen started to come out. We used to try and get away before dinner or as early as we could on a Sunday, partly because you try and like your Sunday off as well, but if you had to go you tried to get done and get back before, you know, so that you still had the day to call your own like, albeit you was tired.

Alan Hayes

When you go out, particularly on summer Saturday mornings, well, we'd go off very early - and this is when I went off Brighton beach - but if you're coming out of Shoreham you also notice it, but more so Brighton. I'm talking about maybe half past six, seven o'clock on a Saturday morning. And we would anchor into one of those marks that I've mentioned earlier, so not that far offshore, and it would be quiet. And gradually the noise from the town would pick up. You'd hear isolated things like a fire engine or a police car. But what really struck you was that after about nine o'clock you would hear a roar, just a roar, and that's what you were aware you were living with all of your life, that you live in the town.

Peter Richards

I'd never seen anything like it

We had some strange catches, some of which I can't name. We didn't have many. Any strange catches we did get, we used to take them down the Aquarium, and they used to buy them off us. And for that purpose we used to take a big tank on board, in case we caught that kind of fish, so we could keep it alive until such times as we took 'em down the Aquarium.

Len Trussell

We had these special permits to whatsername. We had nets that couldn't be used all the year round, you can only use them at certain times; sprat nets, seine nets, special seine nets that used to be used for catching special fish, inshore fish and that, for the Aquarium. We used to get bream, small bream, small dabs, soles, plaice, flounders. We supplied them from just after - well, my father-in-law before the war used to supply them. But me, and that, we started supplying them, again, when they opened up just after the war, about 1946 I expect, up until, oh, when we packed up in 1956, 1960.

Ted Watherington

A lot of people thought that whitebait was a fish on their own, but they're not. The herrings and sprats spawn off Seaford Head together, and the local fisherman's objective is to catch those fish before they've spawned, while they're still full-roed, otherwise they're no good. They're what we describe as pipe-stems, they've got no goodness in them. And the babies of that fish, the fry of the fish, are whitebait. The whitebait, as they still do, believe it or not, come through here in masses, but there was

only one family allowed to catch whitebait and that was my family. And the reason for that is because my grandfather and father, right up to just after the last war I suppose, had the contract to supply the Aquarium when it first opened - with food! Naturally you had to have such a small mesh net to catch them, and they were the only ones allowed to use it.

Joe Mitchell

We was lobstering once, well we used to do it just for about a month, six weeks in the summer. And we had a lobster-pot there, it didn't seem to catch anything, so my father said to me, 'Oh, go and throw it over out there, no good hauling that every day and baiting it up.' And this one day he said, 'Come on, let's haul that pot up,' and when we got it up we had a lobster and it was pure red. You know how a lobster goes when it's cooked, but this was a live lobster and it was goldy red, you know what I mean, really goldy red. And we put it in amongst the other lobsters, and when you sold your fish you laid your lots out on the Fishmarket Hard in Brighton. And when I shot these lobsters out, like you used to shoot 'em out last so they was all kicking about so they saw they was all alive, and they all said, 'What's that there, then?' I said, 'Well, a lobster.' And all the old lot what was round, they said, 'That's a shame to cook that, a lobster like that,' a real golden colour like, and they said, 'Take it over the Aquarium.' So I takes it over the Aquarium, and you had to go back in say five or six days' time to do the two or three coppers off them, whatever they would give you. And I said to the old boy, I said to him, 'I bet that was a show for you, wasn't it?' He said, 'Ted,' he said, 'You'd be surprised, nobody looked at it.' I thought, 'Well, that's funny, a lobster like that.' 'Yes,' he said, 'but that's how they see 'em in a shop window, don't they, when they're cooked. They were in looking at the old dark blue lobsters and black lobsters, but the red one, they thought that was just ordinary.' But you'd never see a lovelier-looking thing.

'Big Ted' Gillam

One of our boats caught a sturgeon. That was offered to the Queen. It has to be offered to the Queen if a sturgeon's caught. She refused it so we had it ourselves. That was caught off of down here. I suppose it was about the late forties. It's the only one I can remember being caught here. Other fish of course, such as unusual fish - if they catch an unusual fish they like to keep it alive in a bucket of salt water, or a container with salt water in it. Or a big, old lobster come out of a pot, because they would take them over to the Aquarium and sell them to the Aquarium and put them in the tanks there. Unusual fish - when they catch unusual fish - that's how they were disposed of.

Johnny Leach

If a sturgeon, which is a royal fish that was caught there, it was sent to the Queen. Because the roe in the sturgeon is like caviar, that was the Queen's fish, because that was royalty. My father, to my knowledge, I think he sent her up two that I can remember of, but today that's all finished. If a blue nosed shark, or a pug nosed shark, was caught

in the nets they used to take it out, keep that net but find an old net when they've got them here, wrap them all up, wrap the shark in, put it on a barrow and tell the public that is what the shark has bitten all the nets and torn them to pieces purposely to get more money. Find an old net, shark in it and put it on a barrow and show and collect money.

Rene Taylor

Well, strange things such as the angler fish which is, it's an ugly fish, great big head, you know, and it's got like a thing out of the top of its head, it looks like a bait, it is, it's a bait for what's name like. And it's like a great big spine thing sticks out, and there's a little thing on the end of it, well, that is the bait and it's a big mouth, big face, big fish and that, and the ordinary fish, they come and sit, and this is what attracted the ordinary fish. This angler fish used to open his mouth, catch them and take 'em that way. Other things - octopus, course, we used to supply the Brighton Aquarium with a lot of their fish, and that, what they had in the tanks, octopus, jellyfish.

Ted Watherington

In the past we used to catch quite a few sharks, I remember Teddy Gillam, he had a thrasher shark that I think still holds a world record. I think it was about fifteen hundred pounds this big thrasher, if you contact him he has got photos of it at the old Fishmarket at Brighton. They used to lay it out with a net over it like, 'This fish destroyed our nets', was a bit of a gimmick for the holiday makers who used to come down and put a few coppers in a box there until it started to stink a bit. In the end this one got so bad we gutted it and we filled it up with disinfected rags and things like that to make it last out over one of the Whitsun holidays. It was getting a bit stinky.

Dave May

We caught a grampus once, in the mackerel nets. It was [about three foot round] and about eight or nine foot long. It looked like a whale, they reckon, some relation to a whale. We had it on show on the front like, they used to wrap a lump of net round it, making out it tore all the nets.

The little octopus, they used to call them preaks. Because they've got a beak under their feelers, haven't they, and my dad used to put his hand in there and turn them inside out. You don't never see nothing of them now. My father, my grandfather, all the fishermen, we used to call them preaks. 'We caught a preak last night.' We used to turn 'em inside out and throw 'em away. But they told me they eat lovely, but whether they did or not, I never tried one. They could bite you, they could. They had a beak right up inside them like that.

'Big Ted' Gillam

During the War my dad had a porpoise. He came out one day with this great big fish on the barrow. I'd never seen anything like it, the full length of the barrow! And all these people were queuing up waiting to get their bit of fish, because it was rationed to the wholesaler, but not to the customers, you know. We used to have our sort of other twopennyworth of this and twopennyworth of that on ration books. And people used to queue up, and they used to argue something terrible if somebody tried to push in. They'd say, 'Well, I was here, and I've only been across here and this is my place.' Anyway, my dad come round, and was much like his dad, very abrupt, he said, 'You can tell them to clear off, there's no fish today.' And everyone said, 'Well, what about that what he's got?' I said, 'Well, there's no fish today.'

And he took it right round the back. This was in the Old Market, not the Level, what we called the other Old Market [Marshall's Row], and he'd got taps round there and great big zinc baths, and he literally cut the skin off of it. You couldn't pull it off or tear it off, like we used to the husses. He had to cut it all the way up, this huge thing. And it was all in different bowls and baths and buckets of salt water. All the different parts of it. And after about three days, when most of the blood was all soaked out of it, we had enough on the slab. And the different bits that were cut, sometimes they looked like huss, so it's marked up 'Huss', and other times it looked like skate portions, and it was 'Skate'. It all depends which way the bone went on it, you see, on the fins. Well, that lasted us, well, I don't know how long. It wasn't all that long, because when people tasted it, they came back for it. But that's the only bit of fish we had that week. We sold it all, and people came back for it. But personally I didn't try a bit myself, but that was that day!

'Queenie' Foster

When I was very, very young in a long - I don't know whether it was a nightgown or what - I went in the Paragon, in a West Country boat. It must have been about 1920s. My father was the owner of the Paragon and I can remember sitting in the hatchway while they was hauling these mackerel nets - like they were out at sea all night - and I was sitting in this hatchway watching these nets come in, and they caught a big guillemot that night in the nets, and my father threw it at me and hit me, and it frightened me for a time, you know, till I come to.

Johnny Humphrey

Funny experiences? Well, we caught a skull once, off of here, and it had two holes in it, and we took it to the museum and they reckon them two holes was what they called trepanning, to let the evil spirits out.

'Big Ted' Gillam

We had a cannonball one day. We were cod-netting or cod-trammelling as we call it, we were fishing for cod anyway, up off of Hove Street and Wish Road, you know, off of Hove. And a big lump of clay come up in the nets, mud or clay, dropped down out of the

hauler onto the deck, and down the deck rolled a cannonball, perfect condition, as it looked, and we all sort of laughed and I said, 'Well, we wouldn't have been laughing if it had been smoking,' you know, there'd have been something weird. But I knocked it against the winch, the iron, like, and it was solid. Brought it home and the boy with us, was Frankie's boy, Chrissie Leach, he took it to the museum, just to see if they wanted it or could identify it or anything, and they just said, 'No, it's from the Napoleonic Wars.' And I think he left it in his bedroom or on his wardrobe or something. We went to give it to the Mary Rose, some divers were working on it what we knew, and I said you might as well have it, if it sits on the shelf down there, and it had all crystallised, and yet when I knocked it on the winch end it was solid iron. And yet when we got it out from the bedroom, we'll say nine months later, it was all gone crystallised and if you'd attacked it, it would have just fell into smithereens.

We've caught a little wooden urn or, we call it an urn, it wasn't an urn, a little wooden box with somebody's ashes in. We caught an electric ray. Obviously we caught our fair share of things on the bottom that we shouldn't have caught, like aeroplanes, wrecks, you know, like a barge, the pier, in the trawl, the Palace Pier. Engineers were repairing the Pier and it knocked the Pier down if you recall, and it sunk, east side. We didn't allow it quite right and we ended up catching this barge and leaving the trawl on it. We had to go on the Pier in the morning to get divers, engineers or whoever was diving on the Pier, to pull our trawl off for us.

Alan Hayes

When we did fishing down off of Worthing, father-in-law and myself and that, it was night-time fishing. And about half past one in the morning, we had this heavy thing on the bottom, on our trawl and that, and both of us, as much as we could do was to weigh it off the bottom. So we had to tow it in, lift it off as much as we could, off the bottom of the sea bed, fasten the trawl up, which meant that the object was hanging, the depth of the cod end of the trawl and we had to gradually edge our way back into the beach. We managed to take a little bit more rope and we landed this object on Lancing Beach. The trawl was all wrapped around it, and we had to come away from it. We left the trawl and everything on this, which we thought it might have just been a great big boulder, and that, and as near in as we could because the tide was out, and course when we went down there when the tide was out and that, it was part of a German Messerschmitt aircraft engine. Well, we landed, then we got in touch with the coastguards, you know, one thing and another, and course they got on to the Navy people.

Ted Watherington

Well, Eddie, that's my husband, told me once when they put their nets down they thought they had got a good catch, so they hauled the net in and it was a German pilot, still sitting in the cockpit of his plane, fully dressed in his flying uniform - not a pretty sight. They said, 'Let him go, nets and all.' Anyway, it tore their nets to bits, which wasn't very good.

Dorothy Pierce

We was fishing just off of here, off of Black Rock here, and we caught a machine gun, and I took it down to our old arch and I cleaned it all up and well, I should think you could have got it working. And the police came down there one day and they took it away from me. And they did take it to pieces and one of them come over and told me, he said, 'It's a marvellous thing, it was a German one, and if he was firing on an English ... he was lucky,' because one of the shells had been jammed in, that's the reason why it never ... he might have got blown up, you know, shot down, because his machine gun never worked. That was after the Second World War.

'Big Ted' Gillam

A little story. We chucked the trawl over there, dark it was presumably, about four or five o'clock, towed down to Saltdean, which was one of our general haunts, and Frank seemed to think that the trawl doors weren't open. The trawl wasn't fishing, there was something up, which you get used to after a while, what the warps look like and that. You can tell, any rate, with experience of it, whether your gear's open or whether you're moving it fast enough and what have you. So we get it up, all in the dark, and in the wing of the trawl, as we call it, there's a big parachute. So we roll this aboard, this parachute, get the trawl up, pull it out clear of the trawl, as we think the parachute, and in it is something about six foot long and weighing ten or twelve stun I suppose, and as round as a large bloke, person. So we think, 'Oh dear, well, what have we got to do here.' We pulled the trawl clear, and this is in the dark mind you, we had lights but it's still sort of dark and eerie that time of the morning. So we pull it out and it was a spinnaker off of a yacht, it wasn't a parachute at all. And the so-called body, as we called it, was a big mound of sand had rolled in it!

Alan Hayes

It's a wonder it never killed me

All our relatives were at sea, yes. My Uncle Jim. I had a great-uncle that was lost at sea, on a very calm night, as the ship was coming about the boom caught him and knocked him overboard. In those days the fishermen wore very heavy leather boots to keep them on deck in any rough weather. Not like the rubber ones of today. And therefore he never stood a chance of swimming.

Jim Sinden

There was one occasion when I was shooting the nets, and that was in March, and I was in a bit of a hurry to get somewhere, and I was paying the net out the back. There wasn't enough tide for me to drift off the net, and I was using the engine, running to and fro, the stern of the boat, and to the engine, the stern of the boat, and of course the net

got snagged round the prop. Well I didn't know whether to take my clothes off and go over the side and cut it free. I did know that you're supposed to keep more heat in if you go in the water and you've got all your clothes on. But I opted to take my clothes off. I thought, 'Well I'd rather have dry clothes to get on when I got back in the boat.' So I've gone over the side, with a knife, and proceeded to cut the net free from the prop. Which took ages, it wasn't just like a rope that you could cut and unwind, it was just lots of net round the prop. I estimated that I was in the water for about half an hour. And the sea had chopped up a bit by this time and I was getting bashed a bit underneath the boat.

I didn't worry until I tried to get back in the boat and then I realised I just hadn't got the strength. The cold had sapped my strength. And it was desperation that got me back into the boat, I did manage to get in, it was pure panic and desperation. I got back in, started the engine, which was air-cooled fortunately, which meant that there was an air outlet, which was hot air, beside the engine casing. I lay down beside that and tried to get the worst of the water dried off me, and then noticed that I was bleeding. I thought, 'Christ, where's this coming from?' And I was cut from my ankles right up to my shoulder where I'd been bashing it under the boat on the barnacles. I hadn't realised at the time, when I was cold I didn't bleed but as soon as I started to thaw out ...

Peter Richards

There was one night we were at Folkestone and we went to sea, it was a fine night, and we'd put our herring nets out, and when you're in them boats, as soon as your nets was out you'd sit down and have your dinner. Because you'd be cooking your dinner while you was going out and then as soon as all your nets were out you'd all come down the cabin and squeeze in and have your dinner. Then as soon as you'd had your dinner, my dad would say, 'Well you take first watch, you take the second, you take the third,' or fourth or whatever it may be, and this fellow that was on watch at the time, Abie Taylor, he was a good fisherman, but he was a bit harum-scarum. Well, this gale of wind come up this night and my dad turned out of the bunk and realised what wind was there, he called us, and as soon as he called you was on boots, on oilskins and what, and we had a big old Kelvin thirteen-engine, and the boat, there wasn't enough power for the boat, and he said, 'Now don't heave before we start the engine up.' And this Abie Taylor he started - it was a big iron hand winch - and he hove and it broke the cable that was fastened to the nets.

Now, we'd got a light boat, and a light boat is a dangerous boat because it's liable to go over. Well, my old dad, he always used to have a bowler hat on when he was fishing, and he would always tell when a net, when something was happening that shouldn't happen. He'd have a little short clay pipe and he'd always have it upside down, and he'd hold it in his mouth smoking it. He would never get in a panic, but if he see you doing anything wrong he'd pick up anything and throw it at you. To draw your attention, quick. He was like that. And as I say, we broke every net loose, and I can hear my old dad now saying to this Jack, 'See, watch your lights and see 'em alter, you know your boat is

moving a little bit out.' And I can hear him now, 'She's all right now Jack, she's moving away out now.' You could see the lights of Hythe altering, so he knew the boat's going.

And by that morning, there was a hell of a swell because it blew a gale of wind, and on the end of the nets you used to have a marker buoy with a little paraffin lamp on, and that was my job to clean that and fill it, and you had to do it and do it properly. Well, it kept alight and, of course, in the morning when it come daylight, the wind had dropped, but a hell of a swell, and we got these nets and there was what we call a 'bight' of net here, coming round, and another somewhere else - all over the place - however, we finished up getting our nets in, and we got two or three round the propeller, which we couldn't help. But, we still had power in the engine. Well, on about the last eight or nine nets in this boat, you always used to have to put the mast up so that we could put the foresail up to help the boat along, because we never had no power, no speed. Well, when we was doing it another fleet of nets come drifting by - another boat lost his fleet - called the Alfred, a Folkestone boat. So my old dad said, 'Another fleet of nets here, we'll have that and all!'

Of course in them days, if anyone was in trouble you all helped. It's funny you'd cut each other's throat the day before.

Johnny Humphrey

I had some good mates. I had one died aboard our boat, Harry Marchant, his name was, and I always had it on my mind he knew he was going to die that night, somehow. It was on a Sunday night [in the 1950s], and his wife come over Newhaven with him and we went into the Ark and had a drink before we went like. We went aboard the boat and we went out, and as we were motoring out - and my oldest brother was with me then - so I looked behind me and my brother George was coming out in his boat, the Challenger, and he turned round and went back in. So I said to this fellow Harry Marchant, I said, 'Come on Har,' I said, 'let's turn round and go back, you'll just catch your wife before she catches the bus home.' 'No,' he said, 'that'll be alright.' And I could have guaranteed him against anybody, in the weather. If he said something he'd be right, you know. He used to study the weather, really.

And we went out and it was growing up black and I said, 'Come on Har, let's go back.' He said 'No, we'll be alright tonight.' We started shooting the nets away and then the breeze started coming like, we were throwing them over, and he says, 'Oh I don't feel well.' And he laid on the deck. Me and my brother were shooting these nets over, and the wind was breezing and breezing, cor, it did start breezing. So as soon as we had 'em all out we made her fast on the rope like, and I said, 'You alright Harry?' and he said, 'I'll be alright, I'll give you a hand in a minute.' So I said to my brother, 'The best thing to do is pull these nets back.' And we done that on our own and we did have a job, because I used to have sixty-odd nets in the boat, and we gradually pulled them in, and we got about ten or a dozen nets in the boat. And my brother says, 'They've all spun up.' And they went up like that, you'd think it was a piece of rope, so much strain and it

swivelled and all the net went round it, we used to call it pudden nets, it used to roll up and I said, 'Thank the Lord for that,' because I could steer her along with the engine, you know and he could pull 'em all over, and he was still laying down there.

And we eventually got all these nets in and we were running into Newhaven. And I said, 'You alright Harry?' Well, I called him Har, I said, 'You alright Har?' He said, 'I'll be alright,' he said, 'I'll be alright in a minute.' I said 'Well, we're all in now.' And I spoke to him coming round the breakwater in Newhaven, and I called up to the watchkeeper on the west pier of Newhaven, I said, 'Will you send for a doctor for us?' He said, 'What's the matter then, Ted?' I said, 'Well, my old mate's been bad all the time,' I said, 'I think he's alright,' I said, 'I spoke to him out round the breakwater.' So he said, 'Well, go in by the lifeboat slip and stick in there, then the doctor can come right down to you.' I said, 'Right you are then, I'll pull up by the lifeboat slip in Newhaven.' Put the boat in there, down come the doctor. He said, 'Where is he?' I said, 'He's just laying down there,' I said, 'He's alright, I just spoke to him outside.' So he was over there about a few minutes, he said, 'He's dead.' I said, 'No,' I said, 'I spoke to him coming round the breakwater.' He said, 'He's dead.' And that was the worst job of the lot, going telling his wife, I tell you.

'Big Ted' Gillam

They took her to sea out of Shoreham, as they went out of the harbour they went off in a gale, and the sea turned them over, they'd only two crew, which was another relative, Marchant, and Mitchell. The family story is - and I believe it to be true because I've heard it so many times in my life - Marchant came ashore in Shoreham, they picked his body up, put him on a barrow, wheeled him back to Brighton up to Nelson Street where my great-grandfather lived, threw stones at the window 'cos it was night-time, and called up, 'Widow Marchant! Widow Marchant!' and she put her head out the window and said, 'I'm not a widow!' and they said, 'Well, you are now, your old man's body's here on the barrow!' My father identified the other body which was found two weeks later. It had come up the hole under the groyne of the Palace Pier and was found at the bottom of St. James' Street in the sewer there - it was two weeks old, that's what I can remember, little instances that stay in your mind.

Joe Mitchell

Now that Harry Marchant, what died with Ted, he had hold of his father by the hair. They were running in Shoreham Harbour and she tailed. They was sailboats that time of day. She struck and they all got slung out of her, and he grabbed hold of his father by the hair but he had to let him go. Funny that was, and he had his, he died with Teddy Gillam, his mackerel nets out. They tried to get him back to save him but he died.

'Rachel' Leach

One we had, a yacht, we had to come ashore 'cos it was rough, very rough, we'd just got the boat up the beach, and this yacht was coming up back of the Piers, ordinary eighteen-foot yacht, she capsized out back of the Palace Pier. And we was the last boat to come up on the beach. All the boatmen would help you when it was rough, help you get your boats up when it was rough, and we were the last boat up on the beach, and course father-in-law was walking along with the cans, taking the oil cans back along the Hard and somebody hollered out, they said the yacht's overturned, and father-in-law dropped the cans and got our boat and it was very rough. We went off in the boat, lucky it was the Jeanette, 'cos she had the powerful engine in it. And we went off and rescued, and we just got hold of the young girl, she was only about thirteen, fourteen year old, got hold of her, pulled her aboard, and her father, got him aboard and that. Towed the yacht onto the beach. We used our anchor cable, always carried an anchor cable in the boat. Towed ashore, and run all the anchor cable up before we hit the beach and that, and then pulled the yacht up on the beach. Never got a thank-you for it. The father and the daughter and that, they was alright, wrapped them in an old tarpaulin, like what we had, used to cover the engine. They was on holiday, they was going back down the old gashouse down over Shoreham. Put them in the motor, run the motor over there, over to where they was on the beach - wife, rest of the family. And that was that. Never come and even thanked us for it. We never even knew when they come and took the yacht away. It was on the beach.

Ted Watherington

Well, my father went to Folkestone and that year, he was in Folkestone Harbour, and the boat started to sink. Well, in them days, a boat had calcium lamps for putting on the masthead, like on his mizzen mast when he was drifting, and he used to keep it [calcium] in a canister, a tin box. Well, the boat was sinking, and them days they had a little boiler what used to make steam to drive the capstan so that they could haul the nets in. There was a long length of rope from end to end to the nets - and my father was down below getting all the stuff out the cabin, and he went to hand this tin of calcium up to this fellow and instead of getting hold of the bottom, he got hold of the lid. Of course this calcium dropped in the water and started the gas coming on, and they used to have a little oil lamp. Of course the boat blew up!

However, he went up the boat builders and the boat builder put nails in it, or what they call spikes in it, and made it a bit seaworthy. Well, he came home, and finished the herring season out of Newhaven, and on the Boxing Day there was a blizzard, and this must have been 1925-26. He said to my brother, my brother was two years older than me, 'Come on Bill, we'll go and get the boat home from Newhaven to Shoreham,' because they used to lay their boats up in Shoreham in what they call the Diggings in the Basin. Well, that morning, I say, it was a blizzard, and he come out of Newhaven and they had a foresail up, mizzen up, and she had an engine, and he come by, and you couldn't hardly see him come by the Palace Pier, so much snow. Well, he went into Shoreham and he said to the lock-keepers that he was going to have this boat done up, he was going to have it re-nailed right the way through. 'Lay it over the south side,' well,

he laid it over and she laid on, like, a bank and she broke her back. So the boat was finished.

Johnny Humphrey

When they lost the Rye lifeboat, that's a few years ago. Well, of course we all used to know a lot of the Hastings and Rye people and the Rye lifeboat got lost. They all got drowned on her, and I was at school then, about twelve or thirteen. And my father [and I] we took a wreath down there as well, and when we got down at Rye they gave me the Prince of Wales's wreath to carry. Right down to where they was buried, in Rye. We went down by motor them days, because I was only about thirteen, I think I was, when the Rye lifeboat got lost. All hands, that was.

'Big Ted' Gillam

One of our boats come in, one of our local boats, they came in because it was blowing hard. One of them, the Our Boys, belonged to old Buck Ennis, who was a local fisherman. His son was on there, Fred. And they come in the night. Fred stayed aboard, he wasn't going to go home, and he got worried in the night that Sammy Andrews and Our Maggie hadn't arrived back in harbour. So they sent the lifeboat out after him. And poor old Sam was out there broke down, so they towed him in. I'll never forget this. I was one of the launchers of the lifeboat, and as the lifeboat towed the old boat up the harbour, there was old Sammy there steering his old boat, because they had no wheelhouse, they had to stand out there and steer their boat - they never had wheelhouses, they didn't know what a wheelhouse was, they stood out and took everything - and as he come up the harbour there he was drinking a cup of tea, he had his old mug of tea in his hand, as though nothing had happened!

Bob Holden

Well, when you're out in fog you think you know where the land is, even if you're fairly close, and it distorts sound, you lose direction. On one particular occasion, it was in the Christie Sue, I was out with one other chap, and we decided to go in as it started to get foggy, but not too much. We were out of sight of land anyway and I was steaming for about three quarters of an hour to an hour and I thought, 'Well, we should be somewhere near the beach by now, back of the power station.' And I'd recently bought quite an expensive compass, a box compass, I said, 'Oh I'll check which way we're going, just to make sure, but I'm sure ...' I was heading due south, I was heading towards France. And if I'd have kept steaming much longer, I'd have been right out in the shipping lanes.

Peter Richards

Well, I can remember this, it was before I left school, we got caught again in the thunder and lightning storm, and as soon as it started thunder and lightning my old dad said,

'Get to work - get the nets in quick!' Well, we got these nets in, and we were running for Shoreham Harbour. Well, at Shoreham there used to be a sand-bar run out back of Shoreham and the seas used to break over it when the wind was southerly, and the tide coming out of Shoreham, and my old dad said to this fellow, 'Get one of them drums of paraffin up on the side,' and it used to have a cork in it, you know? And my dad opened it up and said, 'Hold your hand underneath it, tight, and when I say "Let it go," let it go.' I can hear him now. So, the sea was going to break on us, and this paraffin went on the water and quietened it down. Before that, my dad said, 'Take your boots off.' Oh dear, when he said that I thought, 'Right - we're going in for a swim here!'

Johnny Humphrey

This fellow used to come in here in a barge, and they used to have to take metal up to Lewes iron works, and I used to have the job of towing him up there, an old spritty barge. I used to have that job, towing him up to Lewes. And towing him back again.

And I towed him up there one day and the water was too high, he couldn't get under Lewes Bridge, the little thing, well he got caught under that, he couldn't get through, so he said to me, 'Go on Ted, you go,' he said, 'we'll pole her through, to Averys.' Course they'd only got to go round the bend like, from that little humped back bridge. So I said, 'Alright then,' and I went down. The next thing I heard he got caught under there, the tide flowing, he left it a bit too late to go with the first of the tide, and the fire brigade had to come down and drill holes in her, to sink her, because it was going to lift the bridge up. That's true, that is. Honestly. And when the tide went out, the holes they'd dug in her, she was high and dry, they went and plugged them up with lumps of wood. The Shamrock was the name of the barge. I used to have a regular job towing him up there. She never had no power, no, she was a sailing barge. Used to go up the east coast somewhere, to pick up the iron. There was him, a woman and a boy, that was the crew.

And one day he'd got a load of iron and he had to off-load it at Piddinghoe, and we had to get the mast, make the mizzen mast fast to it, to heave it up, and we was heaving on it, and rope broke on the block, and I've got the mark there [on his head], it come down and hit me there, the block, that's a dying oath, truly, I've got the mark there now. And the blood ran down my neck, the old girl on board there, she was running round with bits of rag, and when I came home to my mother's house, just down here, I took my shirt off and she went mad, where all the blood had run all down my back. It's a wonder it never killed me. It came down from the top of the sprit, they never had no what we'd call yards on the top of the sail, the bottom of the sail, it was one big sprit, and that sail was pulled up on that. When she saw all the blood, 'Up the hospital you.' I said 'Ah that's alright.' I was dead lucky there.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Ted cut his finger, across his thumb and I said to him you'll have to go to the hospital with that. 'Nah,' he said, 'I'm not going into no blooming hospital.' And there was a

needle and black thread on the side and he sat there and sewn it up, really in front of me and the kids. And it healed beautifully!

Barbara Gillam

I had a knife about two feet long, and no guard on it, and the blade hung down below the handle like that - this was quite usual - and I was cutting this cod, and someone come up behind me, 'How are you, Joe!' and hit me, slapped me on the back, and the knife ran right through and nearly took my thumb off. At first it didn't bleed, then all of a sudden blood shot about three feet and I wrapped an old coat around it, and rushed to the hospital.

Johnnie Leach, not this present Johnnie Leach who was the Mayor, but old Bobby Leach's son John, his hands were like boxing gloves. He poisoned every finger, and his father wouldn't give him time off to go to the hospital! And eventually he finished up with his fingers - the length of my knuckle - about four times as thick as a finger. This is John, Harry Leach's brother, with instead of nails they was just like claws, and that's how it left him, his father said, 'Oh they're alright.' I don't want to be crude but the old way was to piddle on them! He said, 'That'll cure that!' Wouldn't let him go to hospital. That's how he finished up, poor old John.

They had several of your old medicinal things. Like if you had whooping cough you had a spoonful of sugar. You split the tail of a flounder - which is a flat fish like a plaice - and let the blood drip on the sugar.

My grandfather he pricked himself, he told me, there on his forefinger, with a gurnard, and it came up like a pea. He rubbed it and it went away. Then the whole of his hand came up like a football, and they lanced it - no anaesthetic - over the back of his hand and across to release the poison. It healed, but a lump come up about the size of a tennis ball in his palm, and that was his nickname 'Old Ball'! And he used to row just with the ends of his fingers! It's probably still there now in his grave! It was solid! Sometimes he'd go in Woolworth's and that, and people would think he might have pinched something! And he used to do it on purpose actually, and say, 'What, you talking about that?' and they'd go, 'Ugh!'

Joe Mitchell

There was another funny incident. I'd been out and shot my nets and a best friend of mine that didn't come out very often but he came out now and again, a guy I'd worked with, and known for thirty-odd years. And what we used to do, we'd haul the nets and get fish out as much as possible while we were hauling, but if the weather was not very good, if it was cold, we'd want to get back in quick, we'd then finish cleaning the nets up the river. But while we were coming in, I had my eldest son with me then, who was about ten, and my pal was sitting up at the front of the boat trying to get the crabs out of the net, and we'd just got half way up the river from the harbour mouth and my friend

started to yell and swear and was going very red in the face, and told me to get up to the front of the boat very quick. And what had happened, this edible crab, which weighed five pound, which is quite a big crab, had got him by one of his thumbs. And I was laughing, because I thought it funny, my twisted sense of humour, and in the meantime I gave the tiller to my son Mark. I said, 'Just steer us slowly up through the middle of the river and I'll cut him free.' In the meantime he's tried to get this crab's claw off his thumb, the crab has come across with the other claw and has got him by two thumbs, and was really putting the pressure on. And I had to prise open the crab's claws with the back of a knife. But both of his thumbs went blue. I think quite honestly if they'd been there much longer, they could have taken the top of his thumbs off. And when we got back ashore I said, 'I think you've earned that crab.'

Peter Richards

Old George Gillam had the Challenger built for his son George and his son Ted had the Alert. Both built by Cantell. Now Ted Gillam, that's a good fisherman if ever there was. He was a hard nut that man, I've known him to go out here, he went out of here to go herring-drifting one day and there was a Lowestoft boat down here fishing at that time, which was a decked-in boat, bigger than Ted's, Ted's was an open boat. And they both went to sea at the same time and the Lowestoft man he come back in again, being too rough. Ted kept going, he goes right away down to Cooden somewhere, fishing, and coming back he got caught in a breeze and I think he was two hours off of Beachy Head, going out all the time and he didn't move at all where the tide was against him, and it wasn't until the tide turned and come the other way he made his way back to Newhaven.

Bob Holden

I used to think he's late, no he's stuck in the pub! I have sat indoors all night when they've been fishing, when they've come in early hours of the morning, but I always made sure there was a big fire and a big saucepan of soup on the stove, 'cos he used to bring half the fishing fleet home. But it was always there, and I never ever went to bed unless he was home as I repeat myself again, I've sat there all night sometimes when he's been out. You do get used to it really you know but the first time of doing it is very nerve-racking you think, 'My God, what the hell's happened here?' Now they've got these - I've just got rid of mine - ship to shore radios. We had one bought, we've had one for a long time, but there was nothing like that then.

When the weather was bad, Ted had about a week over Newhaven. They had to sit when they had gales of wind, really bad gales, they had to sit over there with their boats all night, there's nothing like that now, they wouldn't even worry about them now I don't think, with them in the Marina, no problems.

Barbara Gillam

Well, we had a cabin put in the old Alert and we used to have a little stove with a funnel out the deck. But before that we used to have what we call a fire bucket, used to pick all the old red bricks up, have a bucket, make all holes around it, dig holes all round this bucket, put these red bricks in the bottom, and light the fire from there, and sit round them, in the wintertime. Put the old kettle on the top, have a boil-up. In a wooden boat, yes. It didn't frighten us, no.

We didn't have any risk of fire at any time, not really. Don't ever remember it. Sometimes you had an accident, but like you was wearing the trawl away on a rope through what we call the post, shooting the trawl away, and you used to make it fast and sometimes you'd pull the rope quick and catch it round the fire bucket, knock it over, but we used to have a shovel there what we used to shovel the fish over with, the undersized fish, just chuck a bucket of water over it, there were no bad trouble at all with that, with them fire buckets.

'Big Ted' Gillam

We didn't do much night fishing, the only time I can remember one night, when we did go off the beach, and we were going out specifically to catch cod, or we thought we were, and it blew up very rough and we thought we'd better not chance it. We came in, and because my mate that I fished with was stubborn, we bought all this lugworm, we didn't dig it, we used to buy it, he said, well, he's not going to go home, we'd fish off the groyne, which we did, and he caught several reasonable cod. We then went 'home, and his wife was staying at our place that night as we were both out for the night, and we went home quite early thinking they would be very worried about us, and apparently, we found out, what they'd been doing, what they'd spent the night discussing, was our life insurances!

Peter Richards

All the beach was mined

Well, they shut the beaches up, didn't they? Most of them. See in the wartime they'd only let you ... the boats that never went up [to Queens Park], the older fishermen, they used to fish out of Newhaven and Shoreham. You weren't allowed to go on the beach 'cos all the beach was mined. You were only allowed out from daylight till dusk, and every time we went out they'd check who went out and they'd check who'd come in. On the Piers, on the breakwaters, they know the boats, the coastguards, they'd know who the boats are and they used to watch them go out and watch them come in. It was a funny thing, a lot of the boats went down to Rye Bay, a lot of the boats used to go down there through the spring, from about February up to about, well, during the War they was there nearly most of all the time. And they used to catch plenty of plaice, because that's where the Thames estuary finishes when it comes round, Dungeness. And they always seem to get plenty of plaice there.

Bobby Andrew

During the War, I bought a boat for five pounds. My mum gave me the money and when I came home on leave from the Navy, I saw this old fisherman and he said he had this boat for sale and my dad went with me to Queens Park, as all the little boats were up there. They brought the boat down which was called the Sussex Belle, which I knew of as the old fishermen used to have it at the West Pier before the War.

Steve Ovet

Well now, when the War came along the government took three of my father's boats for the lady sailors, the Wrens, and of course we used to get our own petrol and I used to drive him over to Portsmouth, and we were over there one day, 'cos he went over there because the government wanted something put in one of the boats, and they had to have dad's permission. So we went to Portsmouth and we were over there one day when it was all blitzed, oh it was terrible, really shocking. It was very hush, it was very, very hush.

It was marvellous how it was all worked out. All of a sudden you could see these little boats all getting ready to go abroad, and it was marvellous the way it was done. Some went to Shoreham, some went to Newhaven, and they all met to go across. Most of the younger people that was attached, that was called up, that if they knew anything at all about the sea or anything they were commandeered. So most of them were all commandeered. A young boy who, after his mother died, we called him Trussell, his two brothers didn't want him, so I said alright, I'd give him a home and he could work in the hotel. So he worked in the hotel, and he went in one of the boats; two of my cousins' nephews went into one of the other boats; it was all commandeered, you didn't know from one day to another what was happening.

Rene Taylor

My dad caught a mine cable one day in the War. There was a mine cable across Shoreham Harbour. 'Cos my dad was fishing in the War. He was exempt from the Army because it was essential work. They had to come in and put it on their net, and the chap who was with him said, 'Look Bill,' he said, 'Look what we got here then,' he says, 'It's a mine cable.' He said, 'What are we going to do?' So me dad says, 'Well, there's only one thing to do,' and he lifted it up and threw it back in!

Caught a lot of Germans, pulled a lot of Germans out of the water. The bombers used to crash, get shot down in the Channel. They had to tow them in. Dead pilots, and things like that.

He did a lot of work for Dr Parker [Brighton Medical Officer of Health]. He used to go testing the water and things. To see if it was safe. And he did all the fishing for the Aquarium, he was the only one who was allowed to catch fish to stock the Aquarium.

John and Jim, they went in the Navy. My other Jimmy went in the Army, and Teddy went in the Army. I think it was only sort of if you had boats, see. Really truly, they were my dad's boats, 'cos my granddad was too old. And because it was my dad's boats and that, it was his living, and it was an essential trade, he got exempt. He was getting, what, he was forty odd, I suppose. He was getting a bit old to go in the Forces anyway. But, he did, he caught the mine cable. Well, he just used to take the scientist out with him. You know, they used to come down, and it was always Bill they used to come looking for, and, 'Is it alright, Bill, can you take so and so.' And he would take them out and they'd get their samples of water.

I went to the Brighton & Hove [laundry] in the War. The War had broken out and you had to go in, you were sent, and I wasn't old enough to go into the Forces 'cos I was only fourteen. But they used to send you in, and I ended up in the laundry! It's funny, you always did. Saturdays, we used to do all the sort of the Army, and the hospitals and all that sort of thing. That's all I did in the War, 'cos I had just left school when the War started and that's where I ended up: in the laundry. It was essential work then, you know, keeping the soldiers in ... the Canadians and the Americans, and they used to send their laundry in, and that's where I ended up.

Doris Watherington

With the beaches mined, the Seaflower, with others of the Brighton fishing fleet, operated solely out of Shoreham or Newhaven, being permitted to set sail at sunrise and return by sunset. Initially, whilst my father and grandfather operated the old Seaflower out of Shoreham, my uncle had permits giving us right of access, immediately opposite the Old Ship Hotel, in a gap between the minefields to the sea, whereby we fished a sixteen-footer there from when the weather was reasonable to launch from the beach.

The boats operating out of Shoreham had to set sail together and were usually headed out to sea by the Seaflower who requested the naval boom vessel to move the boom anchored across the harbour entrance. I can recall in adverse weather conditions when most were debating putting to sea, my father and grandfather would come to a decision to set sail and offer those in similar mind to put to sea with them so that they might request the boom to be towed aside.

Jimmy Howell

I got called up, joined up on my eighteenth birthday and went on minesweepers. Most of all these lads, all these fishermen, they all went on minesweepers. Well, they wanted fishermen, experienced seamen and that, you know, from all round the country, mostly longshore fishermen. I joined up on my eighteenth birthday and within eleven days I was on the boats.

Well, all we done was a bit of rifle drill 'cos they knew we knew everything: we could tie ropes, splice, steer a boat, and that's all they wanted then, 1941 when I went up, but a lot of them went up the end of 1939. My brother older than me, he went up in 1939.

Bobby Andrew

If my father had got hold of me, he'd of knocked the hell out o' me. I takes one of the Skylarks to Dover. I got two more blokes with me, like, I'm the engineer. Gets to Dover after twelve hours. The P.O. [Petty Officer] there he said, 'You can take our boat if you like.' I said, 'Yeah, if I wanna commit suicide I might do that!' So he said, 'Why don't you wanna take that boat then?' I said, 'It's got too much speed.' He knew what I meant. 'Well,' he said, 'You seem to know a little bit about the water.' I said, 'Yeah, I know what I can do and what I can't do. If I wanna commit suicide, I'll take that boat what I just fetched up here, twelve hours [Brighton to Dover],' I said, 'and I'll be committing suicide.' They got done in the end 'cos they never had no power in 'em. They ain't got the power in 'em what they have today, what we had then. Thirty-three Kelvin diesel [now], no it was just twelve horsepower, seven, nine horsepower, that's all the boats they had. So he said, 'You seem to know a little bit about the water.'

So we went into Brest and Aulander, something like that it was called. Well, a shell went right through this Dorothy Elena, and I got eighty gallons of petrol down below it. My mate, he's old enough to be my father, I puts him aboard the hospital ship. 'Cos I says to him, 'Got anything to eat then?' He says, 'What d'you mean?' I said, 'Well, we got some biscuits here, this boat's made of oak, they're harder than that!' So they gave me everything.

Now I don't know she's laying outside a minefield 'cos of a short cut. Now if she'd've been my father's boat, she'd have gone downstairs. Built after the First War she was. So this bloke [the Commodore] said, 'What would you have if you could have your way?' So I said, 'You could give me something flat with plenty of power in it. I'll save a thousand lives while you're losing a thousand.' That's where your landing-craft comes from. What did I get? Nothing. I said I'd go in there on a zigzag course and come out on a zigzag course and them Jerries wouldn't touch me. Long as you got plenty of power. Wouldn't believe me. See boats never had no power in those days to do any good.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

We did a convoy, we were six weeks at sea. We was out of Scotland, North, you know, North Russia, all we did was refuel one night for three weeks because that was a three-week journey. Refuel one night, went straight out another. It was six weeks before I got back for any post, it was a place called Loch Hugh which was quite a secret anchorage during the War because of the danger of Scapa when the Royal Oak was sunk. But we used to rendezvous in a place called Loch Hugh, and I was down the mess deck when the mail came and they read everybody's, because I used to get ten bob a week sent to me by my mum. Because I allocated her ten bob a week because

they said if you didn't, if you got killed she would receive no pension, as happened to a couple of my cousins. And she used to send me the ten bob back again! So I thought, six weeks, ten bob a week - I mean the wages then were one fifty a fortnight - you imagine, fifty pence a week was a lot of money! And they said, 'Ain't no mail for you.' I said, 'There got to.' 'No, ain't no mail for you.' And I went up in bridge into the what we call the Asdic House, and there was all my mail. They'd played a joke on me!

I've got the Russian medal actually. The ship I was on, not that I was on it at the time, don't get me wrong, but just before I went in there was a cousin of mine who was on a trawler called the H.M.S. Cape Pessero. They had groups of names for them, like Football Class - like the Albion, Spurs; the Lord Class - Lord Middleton. This one was named after the Capes, you know, Cape Finisterre. And he was killed in Namsos, Norway. We never knew details of it, but my aunt now, being her youngest son, could never look at the sea again. She never knew how he was killed. It came out that the first trawler I was on was called the Arab. It won the Victoria Cross at Namsos, Norway. What had happened is the group they were attached to suffered over a hundred stuka attacks in the fjord. The Cape Pessero was so badly hit the Captain beached her, and the Arab went in stern first to take off the survivors, and the dead were buried in a mass grave at the shore in Namsos. If my aunt had known that she would have been, I won't say happy, but to know he was buried, she couldn't stand the thought that he was under the sea.

Joe Mitchell

So, I gets a draft chit to the Fiji, a brand new cruiser. So, I goes up to Scotland, John Brown's yard, to stand by, only about three weeks like, and get the routine of it. We goes out ... she's in it for action now and we was going out to Madagascar. And in September '40 when we got sixpence a day rise, increment, five o'clock that night we gets tinfished, don't we? We get torpedoed. Well, we comes back in. We got in alright, and I've never seen a sight like it in my life. A bright moonlight night and it was a bit rough, and of course, the convoy left us like, and we was quite expecting another attack, but we never got it. About nine o'clock that night, the moon was shining, and these two destroyers come up head to sea, and they both hit the sea together, and the spray went up over the top of their masts where they hit the sea, and the speed they was going. Of course, they had to escort us back to Greenock. And then after that I went to minesweepers, and that was the finest time I had in the Navy. Small craft and a small crew, it was more or less a family affair.

Johnny Humphrey

I don't think you will find that many of them went across, it is rather a fallacy. There were a lot of fishermen that didn't sail. My father went. They were towed over because it would be faster. They got nearly across to the other side when they were ordered to change course and head for St. Valery.

Jimmy Howell

Several of them said they went, they made out they did, but they didn't go. But those that went, they all went to St. Valery, yeah. These went across ahead of us and they got blowed back, or got knocked back. Then we went across. As we was going they was coming back. And my brother said, 'Come out of it come out of it.' Of course we couldn't do nothing. Then we got towed, towed by a tug some of us, they had some on each side. And when we come back into Newhaven the skipper said, 'Don't untie 'em we may go again.' I said, 'You can bleeding shoot me before you take me back there.' The funnel was like a pepper-box. That was Tommy Markwick was there, Joey Andrew, Leno's brother, Martin. We lost two boats there, two yachts we lost there.

'Rachel' Leach

That's something I don't really much talk about. I belong to the Dunkirk Veterans' Association. I've got a certificate up there for the boat, that copper disc is what was issued for the boats, and that one's the British Expeditionary Force on it, and the certificate under it is signed by the Mayor of Dunkirk. That's my Dunkirk medal.

The Marie Leach. The Marie J Leach actually. But it was a horrible experience and something I'd like to cut out of my mind. Getting the boats together and going down to Dover, and formulating at Folkestone and Dover for the crossing to proceed, that was quite exciting, I suppose, because many people there you met you knew. The adrenalin was flowing very freely. But when we started to go over there it was another story ... horrible, horrible, absolutely horrible. Yes. Poor buggers, you saw them drop before you. Hundreds, thousands in fact. And then of course after that, although I didn't go, a week after that they sent boats over to try to get them off of the coast at St. Valery. You never hear much about this. Some of my cousins went over there, particularly one called Joseph Leach, he died since of course a few years ago, and he went over with a boat called, was it The Breadwinner? No I don't think it was The Breadwinner. Still, he went over there with a boat, and they went to St. Valery, but St. Valery's very much like Dover. Very high cliffs at St. Valery, where at Dunkirk there was sand and beaches. The troops were on the top of the cliff and they couldn't get them down, couldn't get them down to the boats. But you don't hear very much of St. Valery.

John Leach

I was in Brighton. A lot of them went. As far as I know they all got a call from a man called Boniface who was the Chief Fishery Officer at the time. They went to St. Valery actually, they never went to Dunkirk. I know the Doris when she came back was full of bullet holes. The chap that's just died, Gillman, he repaired the holes, and he repaired them with corks, which he got in the Cork Shop in Gardner Street. My brother Bill made six trips to Dunkirk itself.

Joe Mitchell

Rachel: Well, we was on Brighton beach, we had to shove off and go to Newhaven. Then we had to go and lay for a couple of days, till they come and told us what we had to do. Well, then we went up the oil station, got all the oil and all what we wanted, and we was on the Yellow Flotilla, what they called the Yellow Flotilla, see. So when it come time for us to go, we went, we all got towed up, each side, away we went. We got about half-way across when, my brother, he's coming back, so he says, 'Well, this is hopeless.' Well, we knew it was then because we were being pepper-boxed. But I shall never forget the time, Harry Marchant what was along of Ted, he was there and his Jim [Harry's brother], in his Sportsman, so he turned round and said to him, 'Cor blimey, look at the herring,' you know, Harry Marchant, and when the whatsername dropped down, the bomb, you talking about herring come up! Jimmy Howell's father was with us, he went, 'Yeah.'

When I come home, I come home on the side of my feet like that, didn't I, when I come back from Dunkirk?

Elsie: Oh yeah, he had all them blisters.

Rachel: Where the paraffin had shot over the boat I took my boots off of course, something clever, I was going to swim back. Well, I didn't know no different. And the blisters I had, blisters like that, cor. I was in a rum state. Well, we had paraffin engines then, see. And when we got knocked about a bit, you see, there was cans of that had upset, and I took my boots off because I thought it might be a swimming job, of course the paraffin had got under the bottom of my feet, blisters. Oh, what a state, them. Yeah. Oh, they'll be nearly all dead, all that mob.

Elsie: There's not one of them left now, is there.

Rachel: Yeah. Well that's all I'm afraid I can tell you. When we got across there it was all over. My young brother, he was in the Saladin, and they was bombing the shore till we got there. But when we got half-way across there was a French boat, small French boat, they was fetching some of them back, three dead in the boat. And they detailed one of these boats to take 'em back to Newhaven.

We volunteered. We needn't have gone. No, it was one of those things. There was a war on, you had your army over there. When they was chucking the bombs down we had colanders what you put on your head. Yeah, nothing. Bit of wood, hold a bit of wood up, stop a bullet. My boat got knocked to pieces, and I think they give us three pound ten. And as a skipper I got three pound ten, but I had to go to Eastbourne to pick it up. That was the Marie Joyce. Yes it was a hush-up job, that was. I've got a medal, yeah. To tell you the truth, I've never opened my medals from the War and I've never opened them for the Dunkirk, I gave them all to my grandchildren.

'Rachel' & Elsie Leach

You had to call them Bexhill Runners

You didn't dare mention the word rabbits to a Brighton fisherman, he'd tear his hair out. There was superstitions all round the place. On some fishermen's boats you shouldn't turn a hatchway upside-down. They had a little hatchway going down into their hold in the fishing smacks, only small hatches but if you took the hatch off you didn't have to turn it upside-down.

Bob Holden

Oh yes, you mustn't turn a hatch upside-down, that's murder. You go down to Plymouth, you go down to Lowestoft, mention pigs, they go barmy. Because they're superstitious over pigs there.

'Rachel' Leach

I always used to call granddad 'Rabbits'. Everyone called him 'Rabbits' because he was the one who started the superstition years ago, that was what I was always told anyway. If you wanted him down the beach you didn't call his proper name, it was always 'Rabbits'.

Doris Watherington

And any fishermen standing about would give you dirty looks. If you mention rabbits, it was an unlucky whatsername for the fishermen down here. You had to call them Bexhill Runners. Recalling one incident, it was in the summertime and we all had our seine nets in for mackerel. And your seine boats was always facing nose to the sea, because if you saw any mackerel, shoal of mackerel, you used to shove your boats down and start shooting your nets, and 'Peanuts' [Freddie Rolf], and that, our boat was up on the east side of where he was, and his boat was down opposite the Fishmarket. And somebody had been down the beach and had a rabbit skin and had thrown it into the bin. Probably had a rabbit for dinner the day before but they brought the old rabbit skin down and threw it into the bin. And my father-in-law picked the rabbit skin up and went and hid it under the nets like on Peanuts' boat. And he come down there and they was just going out and he looked and he saw that rabbit skin there [on] his boat, covered it all up and he went home. Superstition. It's unlucky, see. If you mention rabbits to any of them, the old fishermen and that, they'd probably slang you off, you know what I mean?

Ted Watherington

A lot of the superstitions go back to the families that you was brought up with, you hear a lot of people now they talk about it, you know, various things like rabbits and turning the hatches over. When I first went as a young lad of about fifteen with some of the fishermen they were very superstitious but I think over the years, when you've got a big mortgage on a boat that's costing you about two hundred pounds a week, I think it's a rich man's pleasure. You no longer can afford to be superstitious. A lot of them were used not for the incompetence of them, but a lot of them for a lack of knowledge and

some of the old fishermen on certain things they used to use it as an excuse. You've just seen me now, maintaining my engine, but if they didn't do that, next time I went out I'd say, 'Some bastard's been along here with a rabbit and stood on my boat,' or something, blame it on that instead of some job that could have been done. But as I say, a lot of the old fishermen were brought up with it, going back to the families. But I still can't understand why it goes back so much, some of the younger people who come into fishing, really it's not a way of life with them, they haven't really had it drummed into them since they were children. I wouldn't think there's anybody now who'd take any notice of those superstitions. I can remember getting a clump as a kid for turning the hatch over, throwing a steel bucket on the nets and things like that. As a kid you used to spend longer trying to learn what you weren't supposed to do than what you were to do. It used to take your mind off what you were supposed to be doing as a job, other than worrying about whether you was doing something wrong that was a superstition.

Dave May

Well, the Hastings [fishermen] like, they've always been called 'Chopbacks'. The Hastings. Chopbacks. Not the furry things, the men, they was called Chopbacks. Some of the old fishermen would come back if they heard it [rabbits] said on the water. Yeah. If you hollered out that word to them they'd all go mad, they used to. Well, they used to play about on the beach but the old fishermen used to get annoyed with it, you know, the young 'uns used to say it, to annoy the fishermen like. As I say we call 'em Bexhill Donkeys so it must have been coming from Hastings somewhere along the line, by that. We caught the bus down here and we were going over to Newhaven, and there was a lorry-load with all, well the Bexhill Donkey skins on, as we call 'em, and we got off and come home. No, he wouldn't have that. We never went that day. And if you ever mentioned it, it was terrible.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Well, I had to be when I was at sea with my father. When a new boat is commissioned, they throw a cork in it, and that cork is supposed to remain in the boat until it goes. And another thing is, you talk about rabbits, you know? Bexhill Runners, we called them. If you saw them, that was definitely an omen. And another thing they would never start a season on a Friday. It could blow hard, say we got our nets ready on the Monday, and it blowed hard all the week and it come fine on a Friday, they wouldn't go and start their season on a Friday. It was just unlucky. It could blow for another week, still wouldn't go on a Friday.

Johnny Humphrey

Another one was whistle. If you whistle on the boat, you'd turn around and say, 'Got enough wind in the Channel now without you blowing up a lot more.' A white-handled knife; if you went aboard and you had a white-handled knife, our penknives, or what we used to use for gutting fish, grab it out of your hand and throw it overboard. Oh yes, you

mustn't have a white-handled knife. You wouldn't go to sea, if there'd been a gale of wind for a couple of weeks and you couldn't get off, and all of a sudden Thursday it would come a bit fine, and Friday it would be nice and beautiful and calm, so that you could go to sea. They wouldn't go to sea on a Friday. Unlucky. If you had been off for the sake of the weather, and all of a sudden it had become calm on a Friday, wouldn't take your boat to sea on that Friday. It was unlucky to go to sea on a Friday after you had been laid up for a couple of weeks weather-bound. Lots of funny little things like that.

Ted Watherington

Oh, you mustn't whistle, no, you whistle up the wind, they always told you that, you whistle up the wind, you start whistling. Yeah, start breezing then, it would.

If you was herring-catching, course you used to get a lot of scales on the boats, you know, like when you was pulling hundreds, thousands, of herrings over the side of the boat, all the scales used to lay. Never wash a boat down, 'cos no matter how many herring scales there were, you never wash the boat down, wash away something that you want to catch again. They would always leave the herring scales there. If you wash them away, you're washing away your living, like. Funny things like that! As I say, little silly superstitions. Well, it was handed down, I expect you thought of it at times. And then if you went mackerel-catching and somebody hollered out 'Good luck' to you, some people would come back for that. 'All the best', they used to say, but we didn't say 'Good luck', that was no good at all.

'Big Ted' Gillam

When a good catch of herring or mackerel was had all the children and mothers held their hands up for the fish, and they used to put, from the gills, open the mouth of the fish and they used to put them on their hands. You open a fish's mouth and that will go over your fingers. When I used to take the telegrams down to my father in his office down there I used to go along and think, 'Have you any fish?' And they used to give me some.

Rene Taylor

Every Good Friday the ladies used to come out in William Street with their buckets of whitewash, and they used to have sort of areas where the steps went down to the basements, and they'd come out, and it was always on a Good Friday, they would come out with their buckets of whitewash and whitewash their basement walls to make it bright, you know, 'cos they were a bit dark. And they used to do this Good Friday.

And the men would bring up, the big, you know, the big ropes they use on the boats, the big scaffolds, we used to called them [Ted: They were warps], they'd bring them up and then they'd be in the street and everyone would be skipping. The mums used to turn the

ropes and the kids would be skipping. And that was every Good Friday, and I think a lot of us used to go to church first. I had to go to St. John's school, and that was in Carlton Hill, and that was a church school, and we'd get up, and we'd always go to church, though. And then come home, and that was our Good Friday.

Go down the Fishmarket, and a lot of the poor kids would go 'Happy Jacking'. Well, they'd go down the Fishmarket where that is, and they'd sing to the people walking along the seafront. And they would sing all the old songs. Any old songs. And people would throw them pennies. And sometimes - you'd see all the kids - they used to scramble for the pennies, and, used to be good. I didn't used to do that, I wasn't allowed, was I? But I used to go down and watch. But there used to be one little boy, and he was weeny. Mrs Jones was his mum. And they were all little, tiny, I mean I'm not very big, but they were really small and he used to be so tiny that he could, I think he got more pennies than anyone, you know, he was so quick. And they called him 'Corporal', I don't know why, Corporal Jones. But he died when he was about twelve. He just got ill. I suppose they didn't have much food, and they were poor, really poor. He used to go down Happy Jacking.

Doris Watherington

Every year when we were children, on Good Friday we all used to go down to the Fishmarket and they had these great big ropes and we used to do skipping, all on the Hard there, which used to be good fun. I suppose it was to do with hot cross buns, where we were crossing the ropes over with skipping. We also played with the spinning-tops.

Margaret Newman

And once a year they'd have the carnival. That would be in the summer. Down by the Pier all the boats would go out and they'd dress with all their fairy lights, you know, with the bulbs. I don't know how they got them to work. They must have had a generator or something. All the bulbs used to be lit up. And they used to push the boats out, there used to be a carnival down there once a year. And that's how they used to finish off. I can't remember any other treats they had.

Doris Watherington

We had a revival of the Blessing of the Mackerel, in his church [St. Nicholas]. And the meeting that we had, that was all the Society members that were interested in doing it, any rate, the meeting we had with him this day, he [Richard Eckersley, the Vicar] said, 'We want somebody,' again I'm not religious but a lot of the old 'uns used to be, and I've heard say if you swore on perhaps one of the luggers years ago, they'd turn round and put you back ashore. I fear that was only the very few. I think they was thin on the ground the religious ones. But he said at this meeting we had, 'Well I want three fishermen to bring me the wine, the bread, something else, oh and the fish, up to the

altar.' And he said, something-something, and he pointed to Frank and he said, 'And I want you.' Frank by this time was sitting down in his chair, trying to hide. 'I want you, Frank, to bring the mackerel up to the altar.' Which he did. The do we had up the church, it was packed, with obviously all the local congregation and a good many fishermen and their families and other members of the fishing club, not necessarily fishermen.

Alan Hayes

My mother was a champion winkle picker

Dr Blaker, who was a second surgeon at the Sussex, took the mortality rate of Brighton in, I believe, it was the 1830s, and he found the biggest killer was gastroenteritis. So he took the worst area of the town which was Pimlico, and he took the mortality rate of that particular area and it proved to be the healthiest of the town. He described the houses: the ceilings were six feet, there were two rooms to the house or cottage, you could stand outside them and look into them through the cracks in the walls. There was sometimes seven families occupying that house. The most furniture in any one house was a table and two chairs. They shared - moved out, moved in, slept and whatever. Outside the houses were heaps of decomposing food, the cesspits were not emptied - they were overflowing, and the children were playing in the January up to the age of twelve - naked! Most of the children were drunk, because the water was so bad they drunk beer. And he took the mortality rate and the only thing he could deduce was the fact that the mortality rate of Brighton generally was due to the open sewers at the time. When he investigated Pimlico he could only deduce the fact that it was entirely inhabited, mainly, solely, by fishermen, and their diet of ninety percent fish kept them in good health!

Joe Mitchell

If you go back in the history of Brighton when it was Brighthelmston you had the Eastdeaners and the Westdeaners. Now they call them denes, which are valleys, and therefore if you had the Eastdeaners they were more to do with the east side of the Palace Pier, because that's where the dene comes down through there. And if you're a Westdeaner, they were mostly on the Russell Street beaches, because that is the bottom of West Street where another dene comes through there. And there was always a sort of a family feud if you go back long enough, between the Eastdeaners and the Westdeaners. When I'm talking about the East and Westdeaners and the conflict between them you're really going back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My immediate family, we're talking about the 1900s, so it didn't really exist. But there was still - when I first went to market, which is back in the 1930s - there were still some families that wouldn't speak to other families even in those days. But that's all sort of changed with the generation of the younger ones coming up, it died a natural death. But there was in those days families that wouldn't talk to families, and when the youngest

grew up they were forbidden to talk to the other people because that family feud had gone on for donkey's years.

John Leach

There used to be Upper Russell Street, Artillery Street, all round there, all the fishermen used to live round there years ago. It's built on now. Most of them, they all used to live near enough to where their boats was. A lot of them used to live up Bedford Street, most of the fishermen who used to have their boats on the beach up by Peter Pan; and then there used to be another lot, used to be opposite the fishing boats, eighteen-foot clinker fishing boats, they used to be on the beach by the Royal Albion Hotel, down by the Pier; and then the next lot of fishing boats, the majority of them used to pull up from the Fishmarket, the old Brighton Fishmarket, most of them used to pull up from there along to the Cruising Club; then there used to be some more, further along on the beach by the [Brighton] Centre, where they've got the square there now. See, they were all different families, and those people who had their boats up there used to live up by Artillery Street, and those who used to live up Bedford Street used to have theirs up by the back of the Peter Pan.

Bobby Andrew

The house I was born in is still there in Marine Gardens. Somewhere or other I've got a letter for it, offering it to my grandfather for sixty quid, in 1904, and of course he couldn't afford to buy it. Who bought it eventually, well, she bought two, Flora Robson [the actress], which were two fisherman's cottages.

We moved to, I believe they were the first council houses to be built in Brighton, not that they were built when we were there, opposite the hospital, the General Hospital, they had porches outside.

Joe Mitchell

I was brought up at St. John's School in Carlton Hill, and there was a lot of fishing families living in the same vicinity: William Street, John Street, Nelson Street. And of a Friday night at four I used to run home - which was only about a few yards from the school - so that my father would take me out in his boat, mackerel-catching again. It was called the Helping Hand and every time I went to sea I was sick, and I was bad, but it never deterred me from going the next Friday night that was fine. I still went.

Johnny Humphrey

When we went to school, every morning one of us in the class used to go down on the beach get the weather forecast, and my dad supplied the information. My dad being the coxswain lifeboat, always had a phone fitted into our house, which was in Russell Street, so we were always attached to the Lifeboat Institution. The secretary of the

Lifeboat was a man who lived in Lower Rock Gardens, so we go from there and we always used to watch out for the weather. Your whole life depended on the weather, and you always listened to your father, he was the one man in your life.

Dick Taylor

We were all born in Chuters Gardens, West Street, apart from Peter the youngest, who was born in Frederick Street. All we had there was a big room downstairs in the cottage up there. There were eleven cottages there, we lived at No.9. My great-grandfather lived in it before us and the stories going back to him, he never went out drinking, but he used to sit indoors and send his wife over to the pub with a jug and he would sit indoors and get drunk. He would never have his trousers on, he used to get out of bed, come downstairs, have his food and get drunk with his long drawers on! Anyway that was my great-grandfather, some character.

In our house, there were two bedrooms: one big bedroom and the garret, which was the room in the roof. So we were posh then because we had a room in the roof and we had two big beds up in the garret. My brother and me slept in one bed and my sisters slept in the other bed, and youngest brother Dave, he slept with mum and dad until he was old enough to be promoted. We only had gas, we didn't have gas at first. My mum was the first to have a gas stove to be fitted up in Chuters Gardens and then when the gas company were putting the main in, the rest of the neighbours up there were going up in arms as they said she would blow the place up, but after about a month or two they all crept up and had a look and they all changed over to the gas. We only had the kitchen range. When you were baking a cake in the oven, you always had a bit of paper in the back to make a seal, it was always scorched. At first we only had the old paraffin lamps and later had gas lamps when the gas was on. Some of the older people in Chuters Gardens never did have gas. Old Stomper Harman and Old Kate his wife, never did turn over to gas, they stayed with the paraffin lamp and the range.

Steve Ovet

We all used to play together in William Street. We used to play buttons. We used to get an old tin box full of old buttons. We used to draw a square on the pavement, and we used to have to see how many buttons you could get in the square. You know, and who got the most in it in the least time used to win, and they'd win the buttons. We used to go skipping. We used to go for long walks, pack up, because in those days you could, they used to pack us sandwiches and a bottle of lemonade and we'd go out blackberrying all day. Or we used to go up to Queens Park all day. The mums used to pack you up and send you off out. Or we used to go down the beach, sometimes, well, beach mostly, but sometimes we used to go to Patcham. Used to walk out there. Go blackberrying all day in September, then walk home.

Doris Watherington

My mother, and father, they didn't want me to go fishing, you know what I mean? See it was only three of us out of the family that went fishing. There was me, my brother older than me, and my eldest brother, we was the only ones. And my oldest brother, he used to go seining and he used to have a fish barrow and a fish shop. He used to go round with his fish barrow and his wife appeared in there running the fish shop. There was only three of us, all the others worked ashore, you know. One worked for Duttons & Thoroughgoods - that was the shoe shop in the Castle Square on the corner of East Street, where the taxi rank is, opposite Hanningtons. My other one was a baker, he worked for Davids & Cowleys in Dyke Road. My two sisters, well, they was married. Well, my mother, she was having a hard life with fishing and that. She didn't want us to know much about it.

Bobby Andrew

There's a few families left here as such but some of the people have come into it are married into families, but a lot of the names are disappearing. Watts was a big family in Brighton, they're no longer there, Saunders, the Andrews, people like that, none of the children have taken it up. A lot of the old Brighton names have disappeared, they never took the way of life up.

Dave May

When we lived in Carlton Street as schoolboys, when dad was herring-catching, we used to have to get up four or five o'clock in the morning, school time, go down the beach and get half a prickel of herrings, which would be about a hundred big herrings. We'd come home and we'd put them in a tub of brine - a waterproof tub - soak them, and go to school where you'd got herring scales on your hands, not washed properly and you get a donk off the headmaster for that, coming dirty. And then you go home dinnertimes and you'd get these herrings and stick them on a stick, you might put thirty on a stick, and then you'd put them in herring dees which was - we used to use a dog kennel, cleaned out when the herring season come, scrub it clean, and we used to use that - and smoke these herrings and make bloaters of them. And we used to have to do that when we come home at teatime from school.

Johnny Humphrey

I used to smoke mackerel, in the back garden. It's so simple to do, you make a cabinet with a little fire separately, a little kiln, and you get the fire going, charcoal is good, and then you stack it up with sawdust, but it mustn't be pine, mustn't be resinous, and then you smoke it for twelve to eighteen hours and it is beautiful, really beautiful. Oh, it's as good as anything. You can vary the taste of smoked mackerel by how you, can't remember the proper term. What you do when you catch them, you gut them, but you open up along the back, you don't open up the belly like you do normal gutting, you open up along the back. Open the fish up, scrape the guts out and all the viscera from the belly. You then immerse them in a very strong solution of salt. Now the strength of

that salt is what determines the flavour. You've got to make it strong enough to float a potato, that's how you test it, but you can make it a bit stronger or a bit weaker. You then hang them up overnight on the washing line, so that the salt all goes in. The next day you start smoking early. The wood you use for the smoking, whether it be oak, elm or whatever, determines also what the flavour's like.

Peter Richards

Both men and women smoked fish in the back gardens. That's the dees, they called that. The dees, it was like a brick cupboard or smokehouse, in the yard. All brick-built, it had wooden struts across to hang the fish and underneath they'd have a little pile of sawdust and chippings, make a hollow in the middle of the pile and set that smouldering. They used to leave it smouldering and the smoke going up used to dry the fish. They got the old sawdust and chippings from Newman's, the undertakers, still there, and they used to go up there and get the sawdust, and make a fire, hang the fish up, clean it, wash it, let it drip dry, and then they would put it in on the sticks and put it in the cupboard to dry, light the fire, and then it would smoke, and the smoke would go up. You know, like you get all your kippers already smoked, and the haddocks, but they stored their own. A long time they could keep it.

Doris Watherington

This Oven's grandfather worked for Bill Streeter on his stall in the Open Market. They've got their own stall in the open market now. Ovet, the runner, his grandfather used to work for Bill Streeter on his fish stall in the Open Market when Bill Streeter had the herring dees in Henry Street. He used to smoke herrings and make bloaters of them. In Brighton, in Henry Street, there was a number of dees in Henry Street. My grandfather had dees there, Streeter had dees there, Johnny Stevens had dees there. They'd put the herrings on spits under the gills and hang them up in the smoke-holes and make bloaters of them.

John Leach

Queenie: People say, 'I don't like the smell.' You never minded the smell years ago. If you had a smell you was eating, wasn't you?

Roger: Yeah, this was it. That was another thing, they say 'You get the smell of kippers in my kitchen, or the smell of fish.' I think they worry about what the neighbours think, or something. But if you could smell cooking, you know people have got something to eat, sort of thing.

Queenie: And it's the same thing years ago. Good Fridays, fish day, Good Friday. Good Fridays we used to have, well out the back, when my father was alive, we'd have boxes and boxes of cod, with the heads on, you don't get that now, with the heads on. And he was out there cutting up big lumps of it and he'd make a big show up on the slab, nearly all cod, in stages. We used to break up the boxes, because the fish used to come in wooden boxes. Now they're all in these polystyrene or these waterproof cardboard

ones. And we used to break the sides off and make, like, steps right up, all on the slab. And all these bits of cod was put along and people would come along and say, 'I'll have that lump. I'll have that lump.' There's nothing like that now. All filleted. 'Oh, my husband won't eat it with the bone in.'

Roger: And skinned. And God knows what. Almost cook it for 'em.

Queenie: Good Fridays is just dead, nothing now. Actually it's a waste of time.

'Queenie' Foster & Roger Harding

A lot of the women down the Russell Street area and, I expect, up East Brighton as well, they used to make the tanned frocks for the men. They would get the canvas and they make them up, sew them, machine them, and would even make the aprons, what they called whales, and also the oiled frocks. All the frocks and the whales were oiled.

Steve Ovet

Ted used to wear bib and brace, and 'cos we had no washing machine to start with, I used to take them out in the yard, lay them on the ground and I used to scrub them with a bass broom. That's a hard broom and I used to scrub them all over with that. I used to have a bowl or a bucket of water at the side and tip a drop over and then just keep scrubbing like that with some soda and a block of carbolic soap, until he bought me the first washing machine. I was the first person to have an electric washing machine with Ted's post war credit [a lump sum received when Ted left the Navy]. Then they all bought their washing along from down the street.

Barbara Gillam

Our stuff was small, but like me dad, he was twenty-odd stone, he was a big man. And his overalls, I can still see Mum, because our backyard was all concreted over, and she's got a bass broom and buckets of water throwing it over and literally scrubbing these trousers, then putting them through the mangle, then doing them again. That was hard work. Everywhere you looked there was clothes. Like I say, he was a big man and I think it was me and Jim, we both got into his trousers, Jim down one leg and I was down the other running around!

Linda Gillam

The women worked in the laundry. It's funny, but if you were in a fishing family, you always ended up in the laundry. A lot of the women in their dinner hour they used to sneak out and they used to go up in the mess room, well, what we called the mess room, and would make them meat puddings, you know, and cook them their dinner, when they should have been working I suppose, and that's how they used to go on, one of them used to sneak off and cook the meals for the rest of the ladies, you see.

Doris Watherington

Well, my mother, years ago, when my father was fishing, and he had about six or seven of us slipping up, my mother used to take washing, do washing for people. She used to earn more at that than what she did if she worked at the laundry.

Bobby Andrew

When I was a child we lived in 9 Chuters Gardens, West Street. I come from a family of nine children, two died. When we were small my mother was very poor because my father used to go fishing and when there was no fish, there was no money so therefore my mother had to do all she could to feed and clothe all of us children. She used to take in washing from different people and she used to bring it home in the basket up into Chuters Gardens and there everything was washed by hand and then put through the great big iron mangle.

When we were children, especially me, we wanted to earn a little bit of pocket money, so I used to stay at the bottom of Chuters Gardens in West Street and wait for the all day trippers to come down from London. I used to have a little board there saying 'Wash and brush up threepence, toilet a penny'. My mother used to have this great big tin bath right by the toilet with a platform on where they could have a wash and brush up. That would cost them threepence.

Margaret Newman

The women, they used to help each other out a lot, I mean, they'd fall out and have arguments, and quarrels but the next minute it was forgotten and they, if anyone was ill everyone would rally around. They were poor in those days. If they had no sheets or anything for the bed, they used to pawn them, you know, they used to pawn their bedding and their wedding rings. Anything that would pawn they used to take in Mondays and get it back out when they got some money, maybe at the weekend. And when they didn't have any money they used to pawn it again. So if anyone had a sick child or if anyone was ill someone would lend them theirs, take the sheets off their own bed, and wash them, and lend them to them, you know, things like that. You know, they wouldn't see anyone go without. Yeah, no one was wealthy at all. All on the same level, down there in William Street. Some of them had a lot of big families. They used to have big families themselves, but they still used to have to let rooms to other people to help pay the rent. My mum shared a house with my dad's sister for years. They used to take a big house between them and have half each. They just used to rent it.

Doris Watherington

We used to go winkling at Black Rock and we got the winkles all crawling, bring them home and my mother put them into a great big tub on the gas and they were all climbing up the sides, she'd cook them and we would eat them. My mother was a champion

winkle picker and she used to get a hair pin out of her hair and get them out. You would find her with all these little black spots all over her with the heads of the winkles.

Margaret Newman

They used to go winkling in the winter, where the Marina is now, the men did. Where the Marina is now, there used to be all rocks and they used to go down there picking winkles, and they'd come home and cook them, and they'd go round Sunday afternoons, and the women used to do that, go round Sunday afternoons, or with the barrow Sunday mornings, and sell fresh winkles for Sunday tea - everyone had winkles for Sunday tea. Used to, you know, all sort of the scollops and the lobsters, all the bits what got broken off, and they couldn't sell, they used to bring home. Well, we took it for granted, but it's luxuries today. I think we all ate fish. And I think we all would sooner have fish now.

Doris Watherington

Things were hard. People talk about poverty now, I think a lot of the time we was below the poverty line, but we was well fed, we always had a meal on the table. Mum used to make pots of soup, steak and kidney puddings and all things like that, it was all part of our lives - but not much fish!

Linda Gillam

It was hard work bringing up a family involved in the fishing industry, we always had something to eat, there was always something on the table. My mum was a very good manager and she was a good barterer as well. If my dad brought fish home, she would swap the fish for meat from the butcher in Ship Street for sausages or for a bit of scrag-end or some 'park railings', that's what Mum called the breast of lamb.

Steve Ovet

I can remember when I was a boy of twelve and thirteen, my father had a bad season, I've had fish pie for Christmas. If we had pork, a leg of pork, edge bone of beef, that was a delicacy then to have meat at a fisherman's house. Yeah, my mother used to make a nice skate pie. Get a quite big skate and my mother used to cut it up, tiny squares like Oxo, bit bigger than Oxo, cut it into squares, cut them up and put 'em in a great big dish, put them in and go and get some streaky bacon or pork rinds, fritters or potatoes, put it in an oven and bake it. I don't mind admitting I can eat anything. I do love fish though, a nice bit of fish. I like a nice fresh piece of haddock, fresh haddock, straight out of the water.

Bobby Andrew

My early recollection of fishing was when I caught a little bass on the groyne and brought it home, and I don't think my grandparents knew how to cook it quite, a bass is quite an unusual fish to get, and I spent all the Saturday afternoon pushing it around in a bowl of water waiting for my mum to finish work. She didn't come home, or I didn't see her, because like she worked quite hard and they told me that it went off and they couldn't cook it. I feel sure they just threw it out because they didn't know what a bass was, they weren't fisherfolks like. And bass then wasn't, nobody had heard of bass much, they couldn't sell bass.

Alan Hayes

I'll tell you about Rosie Fry. Her name was Rosie Westgate, and they were quite poor. Every Monday she would come across to my dad's sister Jane, and say, 'Mrs Lee, have you got any fry-up left?' Which was the left-over vegetables from the Sunday lunch, chop it up and fry it all up in the pan and they'd make sort of like potato cakes of it. But it was called fry-up. Course, she got the name Rosie Fry-up because every Monday she would come across to see if there was any fry-up.

Also there was Scotch Annie. Mrs Virgo. She came from quite a wealthy family in Aberdeen, I think. Scotland, anyway. And she lost her husband, he was a fisherman and she met Mr Virgo, who was a Brighton fisherman. What he was doing in Scotland, I don't know. But they got together and they got married, and she came down to live in William Street. Course, she was so broad Scotch no one could understand her for a long time, so she got the nickname Scotch Annie. That was a fishing family - the Virgos.

Doris Watherington

We shopped mainly in St. James' Street, it was great then. There was a little Sainsburys on the corner of Dorset Gardens, they used to pack up all the butter individually. And there was Meads, where Boots is now, they used to have all the big hams hanging up, it used to smell great. They had biscuits and cans of food stacked up in diagonal rows, it was great.

Barbara Gillam

The old Sainsburys opposite to where B-wise is now, the counters were all like a brown liver colour, like onyx, I can remember that as clear as anything. And Woolworths, that's where B-wise is now, and that had the old wooden floorboards, they weren't highly polished then.

Linda Gillam

You know where, well, it was the old post office, in Edward Street, it's all closed now, but on the corner there, there used to be a bakehouse, and it was called Greenfields and he made all his own bread. We used to go down there every morning for our fresh

bread and rolls. And Sundays, the ladies used to get all their dinner ready, you know they'd put their roast on and their potatoes, and get it all in the dish. And they used to take it down to Mr Greenfield, and he put it all in his big ovens for them. He used to cook it all, their Sunday lunch. And they'd go off down the pub or wherever they were going, and on the way home they'd pick the dinner up and it was already cooked. And he used to charge them, I don't know, thruppence or sixpence and he'd cook their dinners in his oven. I remember that! They used to have a bit of roast meat, or whatever they had, or a little baked stew. But they never cooked it at home Sundays. The ladies didn't, I suppose that was their little treat, really.

Doris Watherington

When my father was at sea, on a Saturday morning I used to go down and meet him and if he came ashore - he didn't come ashore every time because so many of them had to stop on board on the boat and the others came home by ferry boat - and if he used to come in, he put all the fish on my fingers, you know the mouth of the fish, and I would carry them all up like this, all the way up, up to home. I wasn't frightened as they were all dead, it wasn't actually in the mouth, it was in the gills.

Margaret Newman

Sunday was our main day, we used to go down to me gran's, me dad's mum, or go up the cemetery or down the pub. The local was three door up from us. It was called the Red Lion or the Black Lion on Mighell Street. Sunday was our main day, he tried to keep that for us. We used to live at 55 Mighell Street. We never had a lock on the door.

Linda Gillam

The local meeting places for the fishermen were the Cranbourne Arms, the Lamb & Flag but on Sunday mornings, if they weren't at sea, it was always a treat to go down to the Fishmarket and see them on top of the market, where the steps are, that's where they would all be. All little groups of them would be walking up and down just talking and yarning and then they would stop and they would start again, up and down, up and down, and they all had their nice hats and coats on. My grandfather always had his coats made down Zeff's the tailors down North Street, he always had a melton collar, and he always looked smart, with a nice silk neck handkerchief. My dad never wore a tie.

Steve Ovett

I used to go to the Fishermen's Club, but that was abused because they used to encourage other people, you know, never kept it solely for fishing, and the fishermen. I can remember as a child they used to hold meetings and that. I can remember going as a child. On a Sunday morning they used to have a meeting there and I used to go there with my father.

Joe Mitchell

When the men were fishing, the women sometimes went out on their own together over to the pub called The Full Moon in Boyces Street, which was owned by Mrs Tuppen, that was my mother's little bit of enjoyment to have a little drop of stout.

My father was always singing and if we went to anybody's house, a party or anything, my mother used to sit in the chair and my father would stand in front of my mother and sing to her and he is crying all the time, all the tears would be running down his cheeks. My mother would say, 'For God's sake, sit down Jim!' My father used to always sing 'I Will Take you Home Again Kathleen', that was my father's song. My father used to bring home fish and he would want to dry them off, so he would have them hanging right from the ceiling all the way down drying off, the house must have smelt lovely!

Margaret Newman

We used to have days out at Camber Sands, a friend of me dad used to have a van. We used to put the settee in the back and go down there. It was great fun! Just day trips, we could never afford a proper holiday. That was our holiday doing that. Then during our summer holidays we'd be down on the beach from about nine, ten o'clock until about six o'clock at night.

Linda Gillam

The first place I go to whenever I go away is the fishmarket. That's because when you've been brought up with the sea you can't get away from it, and I bet you if I go away anywhere, it's always to a fishing place. Hastings, places like that, because you can't get away from the life. I'm eighty-five. To me that's not a bad life, is it? Eighty-five? My mother had nine kids, it's just how life is and has been. A lot of the fishermen down here, most of them, in fishing towns, they all had large families. I get very interested when I go on holiday because I always go somewhere to go and be with fishing people. You go out to fishing places and you see how they have their boats, and all that like what they are in your own places.

Dick Taylor

I took my wife two or three times when we was catching - we used the feather jigs on the end, you know the feathers - well, I took my wife two or three times, she thoroughly enjoyed it. She says to me, 'Well, why don't you take me out fishing any more?' I said, 'When I go out now' - me and my mate who I was telling you, John, he's got his up the Marina, I used to go out with him, but now my son's got his own boat out there - I said, 'When we go out,' I said, 'We go out all day, go out from about ten in the morning round to about four o'clock,' I said, 'Not like when you used to come with me, when there was plenty of mackerel there,' I said, 'You only used to come with me for two or three hours.'

Bobby Andrew

We took some youngsters from the school on the Surprise, because the wife works down Moulsecoomb School and we used to take a little party of kids from the school of an evening, if it suited, like after the actual fishing. We couldn't have too many because obviously to control them, and believe it or not there was a couple of kids hadn't seen the sea, lived in Brighton and hadn't seen the sea, '79, '80-ish. And that really was a bit of an eye-opener for me. I mean I can understand a kid not being able to swim, but not to have ever seen the sea!

Alan Hayes

When it was low tide, the water was only ten foot deep, and it was easy to get down there, but sometimes it would be low tide early in the morning, about seven o'clock, and my old man would have been there since about half past six, looking after the diver. At seven o'clock I used to have to take his breakfast to him. That was cooked by my old lady in Bread Street and put in between two plates and a big tea-towel, with the corners brought over, tied in two knots, with one plate upside-down on top of the food, you know, so as to keep it hot, and a jug of tea, with a cup in the top and I used to have to run from Bread Street. I used to go right down the bottom of Middle Street, and belt right along to the edge of the Pier. There was a man waiting there, and he'd see me coming and open the gate, because I'd still got to run the length of the Pier to get it to my old man, because he was always at the end where the landing stage was. I used to get a bloody roasting or a clip round the ear if it was cold. Oh yes, that's why I had to run.

That's how we came to get hold of the pigeons, because up on those girders, pigeons nest on those girders, under the pier. And when they used to nest there, some of the little ones, the fledglings used to fall out of the nest, and fall in the water, and they couldn't properly fly and my old man used to scramble down the piles and he used to pick them up and put them in a box, and he'd say take them home, and I used to take them home. We sold them to a bloke named West who had a fish shop in Church Street, who kept them for a hobby.

James Ward

I'm seasick, I only went with Ted once. We took all the kids, it was like a waggon train. I'd got all the saucepans, all the grub and he took me out, he'd got a big boat then called - that was the Arthur, I think. And have you ever tried to strain spuds over the side; drop one, catch one! And he pulled the trawl up and he'd got a great big farm tractor tyre in it and we put it on the boat you see, so helpful me I slung it back over the side and it was going round and round and he pulled the trawl up again and he said, 'Cor, I've got another one of those tyres,' but it was the one I'd thrown back! That was my last time on the boat.

It used to annoy me when he took the kids with him, specially when they came home one day about half eleven at night, he'd got two boys with him, the two eldest boys. They were like twins, they were. Ted must have been about six, Jim about four, something like that, and a bloke came round the corner and said, 'You looking for two little boys?' I said, 'I'm looking for one big one!' But I did get very worried at times.

On Andrew's bedroom wall he painted the boat all along the wall in bright orange, the Aquarius, we just let him get on with it - 'You've got to sleep in it, you get on with it!' He done a good job. He used to sit for hours with that balsa wood; boats, boats, boats - that's all they ever thought of!

Barbara Gillam

It was the centrepin of the seafront

Well, going back before my time, do you know Station Street? You know the arches where they sell the cars? Well, when the railway first came, the Fishmarket was taken from the beach and put there because it was the first time they could send fish away from Brighton and receive fish from away. And consequently they were all highly delighted, there was plenty of money being made, they had an outlet for their fish. But there was such an objection from the houses around with the smell, that they asked them to go back to the beach! To which there was a petition formed objecting to going back to the beach. This was when the railways first came here. Anyway, they finally got them back to the beach but a lot of them moved up into that area. You'll find a lot of fishing families lived in that area.

Joe Mitchell

My biggest thrill was to go down the market of a morning, perhaps once a week, twice a week, I'd like to think I bought it out of my own money but I don't suppose I did, I suppose at the time they gave you a couple of shillings, to go down, and I bought two plaice or three plaice off of a barrow. Well, that was something big for me to go and actually buy. You know, it's alright to go to the shop and buy a pound of butter, it was quite simple, wasn't it, but to go and buy something live or something fresh or something like that, I can't quite explain what I mean but it was a big thing for me to go down the market. I could have only have been, possibly nine or ten, but there weren't the traffic so you could cross the road, at that time of the morning, like seven o'clock I suppose, and to come home with these three or four plaice, and I probably didn't like fish but I had to eat it because I'd gone and bought it. And I done that three or four times.

Alan Hayes

My first grown-up way of fishing was when I was helping on the boats down at the Fishmarket which was situated on the Lower Esplanade, and I used to go down there

and I used to go out on the ferry boats and the big trawlers used to land their fish on the ferry boats and we used to bring the fish from the big trawlers on the beach. And we used to carry the big boxes of fish up by hand. And in those days a box used to take ten or twelve stone of fish in each box, and it used to take two of us, two of the lads from the school, to help get them up the beach. Then we used to grade the fish on the Fishmarket. This was early in the morning by the way, at six or seven o'clock in the morning before you went to school. For this work, helping them get the fish to the Fishmarket, up the beach, we used to receive five or six little fish each. Just enough for one of us to eat! Then as we gradually got older and we got more sensible, we were able to mate up with the fishing trawlers, and we used to go out ourselves and help catch them, and shooting the nets and pulling the nets in.

Len Trussell

When I first started, the old Fishmarket used to be on the beach opposite the Queens Hotel, and there'd most probably be twenty boats land a day, and when they landed you'd get the top - on the prom - about one hundred to two hundred people - visitors - watching the fish being sold. You used to put your fish on the ground and you had about six or seven salesmen, different fellows selling different boat's fish. And they were all opposition parties to each other. The one with the loudest voice would get the biggest crowd round him. Especially one old fish salesman, Bobby Leach, he was a big old fellow, and say you put your fish down in a lump, he'd get his boots and halve it near enough, and sell half of it. You might get, say, an extra shilling on that lot to what you would on the other lot. And they were all in opposition to each other.

And in the old Fishmarket, in the herring season, you could go down there at seven o'clock at night and you'd find the lorries coming in from Newhaven - because all the big boats used to land in Newhaven - they'd be sending herrings in all night long and they'd shovel them out of the lorries, straight on the ground outside the Fishmarket, and in the morning they'd sell - them days a lot of herrings used to go away to Plymouth - in barrels - what are called 'kits', and a small one would hold two and a half hundred herrings. That was before the herring season started at Plymouth. You see the herrings used to swim from the east coast round, and Folkestone would get them first, then Eastbourne, then Brighton, and then down the coast. We never had nothing to do with selling fish. The salesmen used to sell it. But, you come down there and, 'Oh, that's a nice lot of fish,' and he would start selling it by Dutch auction, see? That is, he'd start say at a pound and come down. So when you looked at that there fish you said, 'It's worth to you eighteen shillings.' It was booked to you at eighteen shillings, and very likely to a fish hawker it might have come down to eight shillings. He'd wait until it came down to eight shillings before he bought it.

Johnny Humphrey

Well, you had two different types of fleets in Brighton. I am sure you had this from John Leach. The larger boats, they used to follow the drift fish, like the mackerel, according to

the season, and if they were trawling, or if they were drifting off of here in the early hours of the morning, they would drop anchor opposite the Fishmarket which was known as the 'roads', and the hufflers used to row out to unload the boats and fetch the fish ashore for auction.

Jimmy Howell

Of course, they had to unload the boat at the water's edge before they started all this, because if they had a good catch at a night's fishing, or day, they would have lots of boxes of fish to unload. Then they take them to the owner of the boat and load them onto what they called the Hard.

They had a load of mackerel one day, oh, five or six lorry-loads, and it was on Shoreham Beach, and they can't get 'em nowhere, they've got to go through this woman's house. They got permission to go through her house with it. So we went over there, they come and got us, me and Alfie Gillam, Teddy Gillam's brother, and three or four of us old ones, to carry 'em through this woman's house to put 'em on the motor. Had to fetch 'em in Brighton Market, see. So I got an ice-cream and Alfie Gillam got two. I said, 'Thank you very much.' That was the payment. Yeah, I got an ice-cream.

'Rachel' Leach

The fish, wherever they landed it, was loaded into lorries and sent to Brighton and tipped on the Brighton Hard, sold from there, because Bob Leach was a fish salesman, and he had his own boats, and he used to sell his stuff to whoever wanted it. The shopkeepers used to go down there and they'd have a pile of herring about eight foot high, they had, sixteen feet at the bottom. There'd be men there, that would be counting them, and they'd count them, in fours, as the fish were in a heap. They used to throw them through their legs backwards, they would be put into the boxes as they counted them. When they were counting them it would be one and twenty, two and twenty, and where it got up to a hundred and twenty, you bought that as a hundred fish, you got twenty on top.

James Ward

When I was an auctioneer it was a matter of getting up about five o'clock in the morning and getting in the market by at least six o'clock, and to see that the fish was coming in from Shoreham and Newhaven and was unloaded by my humpers and put out in lots, because it was always laid out in lots ready for auctioning. And then the auction would start somewhere round about seven or half past seven according to how much there was on the market. If it was a short market - if there wasn't a lot - it would be half past seven. If there was a lot to go through it would start at seven o'clock. You get the feel of a market. If you're a market man, and you go to market, and you do it on a regular basis, as soon as you put your foot in the door, you get the feel of it. And you get to feel whether it's a keen market or whether it's a slack market. And if it's a keen market, well

then you keep your prices keen to start with and wait for somebody to slack it. Prime fish, which is soles, turbot, brills, lemon soles are sold by the pound. And plaice downwards, plaice, skate, huss, gurnets, whiting, pout and innumerable other sort of fish, such as conger eels and all that are sold by the stone.

John Leach

My earliest memories - I used to go to the Fishmarket when I was, say twelve, eleven or twelve years old, and count the herring up. It was nothing for a boat to have two, three, four 'last' of herring. I don't know if you know what a last was, but it was a count of herring. To give you a little idea, four herring were called a 'werp'. And believe this or not, there were a hundred and thirty two to the hundred, because there were so many werp to the hundred, thirty-two werp to the hundred; and there were, oh how many, to the last. Anyway, there were ten thousand herring to the last, that was a hundred and thirty two to the hundred, so something like fifteen thousand herring to the last. We caught a last and a half, and this is true, one day, and there are two tons to the last roughly. Those herring were put in the back of the carter's lorry, not in boxes, loose. They were taken out to the Open Market and they were sold by twelve o'clock, twenty-four a shilling. That's true. That's the most fish that I know that's ever been sold in the market. We used to sell a hundred paired boxes of kippers, fourteen stone box, twenty-four pairs roughly to the stone box. We used to sell a hundred boxes on a Friday evening between seven and nine, to earn a shilling a box, to earn a fiver.

Joe Mitchell

Oh, I used to work in the old Fishmarket in Brighton when I come home from sea. I used to help the salesmen. Put the fish out and all that. Any soles, you had to take the big soles out, put 'em in one lot and the next size there, and what we called the small soles, we used to call them slips. Same thing, but they was put out as slips. And you always had to put 'em with your brown side up, make sure they were sand soles because they was the colour of the sand, their backs was. But sometimes we used to go up the western fishing, off of Shoreham and that, and they had the same colour as the rocks on the bottom, black. And they reckoned they was tough. They was just the colour of the ground they was feeding on. And when I wasn't at sea I used to still go down and do it, you know. It was all good hank really, because you had to lay your fish out in lots. You'd start off with the big plaice, the next plaice, the next one down, the soles, then you had the odd fish, cod or lobster or a few crabs you'd put out. And it was all put up for auction, it was auctioned off, the old salesman get out his book and he'd start off, away he'd go. I don't know if they were professional, but they were real salesmen. They took so much in the pound, it used to be eightpence, ninepence, shilling in the pound, something like that. They'd write your ticket out, it showed what they took, and that was it. Just a little bit of card like that. No, we never sold our own fish. We always used to take it to the market.

'Big Ted' Gillam

The Fishmarket was held on Brighton beach opposite where the Brighton Thistle Hotel is now, down the steps there. The outside market, they used to sell fish from away as well as local fish. A bye-law was passed where the local fish only was to be sold outside, they had a big ice-well made in there and all the fish there came from Grimsby, Hull et cetera, and that had to be sold inside the market and the fish salesmen had their stands in there. They all had their names over the top, the Humphreys, the Leaches, the Gunns, Jack Gunn, his nickname was 'Snockam', he was the bloke who used to sell my dad's and grandfather's fish. My Uncle George, he used to sell my Uncle Jim Gillam's fish, Bobby Leach, he used to sell Sammy Andrews' fish and his own family boat's fish and perhaps one or two of the others. The others in there was the Mitchells, they used to come out now and again, if their little family boat had any fish, they would sell it off.

Steve Ovet

In the old days when we used to sell in the open on the old Fishmarket Hard, which we were moved away from in 1948, under the promenade opposite the Ship Hotel, then the fish was sold on the Hard which was open. And if it was raining, it was still sold in the open and the auctioneer used to get one of the boys or one of the younger men to hold an umbrella over him while he was working, because you're working with a book which you're writing in all the time and you couldn't get it wet because it would blot. We used pencil in those days, biro pens hadn't come out. So you normally had someone standing there with an umbrella over you. So that's how it worked, it was a hard life.

John Leach

Because the fishermen, when they used to buy their fish, couldn't sign anything, they each had to have a different symbol. And all those years ago they used to laugh if someone couldn't put a signature to it, and had to put an 'X'. But that was true, you had to put a symbol.

Roger Harding

As far as the transporting and sale of the fish, we used to have a fishmarket every morning, a sales morning every morning, and the local shopkeepers, some of 'em would come from as far away as Newhaven or Shoreham, they used to come in and buy their fish early in the morning. And the selling of the fish was done by Dutch auction, and it started at half past five in the morning and finished at twelve o'clock midday. Then for our work we had to wash the market down, drain all the odds and ends away, and by one o'clock the market was like a new pin, it was clean. We had several rows and of course there was rivalry, which you get in fishing, and there was a lot of secrecy going on. One man wasn't able to know what another man was catching or getting for his fish. But you couldn't always disguise what fish you'd got, as they used to wait for you to come in to see what you'd got.

Len Trussell

There were six fish salesmen, open every morning and the people used to look over the top. They had plaice, sole, well, everything that come their way. They'd sell it for you, you had to pay 'em commission. John Gunn used to sell our fish, his nickname was Snockam.

'Cow Heel' Andrew

The Leaches were one of the main salesmen, there was Leaches, Gunns, Rolfs, the main Brighton families at the time. Old Harry Leach was the father of Johnny Leach, who was the Mayor of Brighton, John worked in the market with his father. Tom Leach was the son of Bob Leach, Harry Leach and Bob Leach were brothers, they were quite big families in them days, they were the two biggest salesmen in there. Georgie Rolf, there used to be a bloke called 'Mungy' Rolf and there was the Gunns in there. One or two other people came in over the period.

Dave May

We used to catch it and sell it wholesale on the slab, Dutch auction, you know what I mean? Dutch auction, see they start with a price. See there's two different auctions, one that starts and you bid up; and one you put a price and you go down, until they buy it. That's a Dutch auction.

See, you got your fish on the slab, and all the buyers would be standing around and it all depends if the fish is scarce, he'd [the wholesaler] know near enough what price to open up. So if he knew ... he'd say thirty shillings a stone, and then if he couldn't get thirty shillings he'd say twenty-nine, and then he'd go down until somebody bid for it.

Bobby Andrew

It was sold by Dutch auction. It's the opposite to an auction, whereas they start at a figure and came down, and you stopped them at a figure so you bought it on your merit, like they'd have Dover soles and they might say start at two bob a pound, one and eleven, one and ten, one and nine, and you stopped them and bought them then. The salesman took a commission, and the fishermen has the rest. As a wholesaler you sold it for them, whereas the commission was deducted, it was a shilling in the pound or whatever. You'd be selling it to the retailers.

Well, you still bought it on your merits, on a question of how much was caught, anticipating the weather, and a lot of the fish was better a few days older, so if you thought it was going to blow hard for a few days, there won't be no fish for a few days. And then again you had to know the times of the year, the seasons, and the quality of the fish, when they were spawning and things like that.

You wouldn't believe the amount of fish that was sold, and how times have changed. I'd go to the Open Market - and to give you a little idea - at seven o'clock on a Friday, not every day, you'd put another show up for the evening trade, so you were working five to nine on those days. As I said, it was quite hard.

Joe Mitchell

I used to leave our flat at Southwick. My wife used to make me some toast, five o'clock in the morning and I'd drive off and be there for six o'clock at the market in Circus Street. Round the back where the vegetable market is. Used to get down there and fight for a place to park. We'd park, get in, then get round in a circle over the fish and bid for it. It was an auction in them days. I could never understand, I'm talking of the time I used to work for George Watts, he had a manager in three shops and all those three managers would bid against each other for the same sort of fish. 'Why don't you just let one of us go down and bid and we'd make a list up each night of what we want and give it to the person who's going to bid and he'd buy the fish for us.' But he could never see it. He used to trundle down there with his poodle in his arms. He used to call it Micky after his son. One time, I was bidding for some large plaice for Easter and Passover, large beautiful plaice, and I could have bought them for five pounds a stone, but Dickie wanted them for his customers and we ended up paying nine pounds a stone!

Kevin O'Connor

Roger: Course that's another thing that's changed, you've got no auction. There was a hundred boxes of herring or something. You'd just get one, and you'd just tip it over on the floor, and there would come out just one, just as a sample, and they'd say, 'There you are.' And you'd start off bidding. But it used to go down, not up; Dutch auction. You'd know all the signs, the people standing round you nodding or something, you know or whispering, that sort of thing.

Queenie: Sometimes they'd have it in the arch, wouldn't they, but it was all on the floor, wasn't it?

Roger: Oh yeah, everything on the floor. When we used to 'ave the auctions, you used your judgment. You'd know the boats caught the best stuff. You knew the fishermen, who they were. And you'd go along and look at the stuff, and get it in your mind, and think, 'Yeah, I fancy that, and that, and that,' and look at the alternatives. Then the auction would start off, and then it would find what I would call its 'true' price. Nowadays, I don't think it does make a true price, what it should be. Some days it should be more than others. But some days, you looked out, and if it'd been blowing for a couple of days and you'd think, 'Well, there won't be much down there.' But you'd go down there and someone had been out somewhere, in a little cove or wherever they go, and they'd share out a couple of boxes, 'Little bit for you, little bit for you.' They used to make good money, but they was fair, very fair.

Roger Harding & 'Queenie' Foster

I can remember going to auctions in the morning and we were in a ring with all these top people, we had some people down from London at times, and I'd look at the fish and think, 'That's what I'd like.' And someone'd say, 'Up,' because they started from low. Whereas, in Holland, they go down. And all of a sudden he'd shout, 'Kevin's.' That was my fish. It did help me. It really helped me. And he didn't expect anything for it. Others complained. He never got anything for it. I never gave him any backhanders or anything like that. He just wanted to see a younger person come into the business. There were elderly people and he'd wipe them out, just to give it to me. He'd say, 'I'm giving a younger person the benefit now.' He used to come round on Saturday, pick his bill up and say, 'You've got it now, what do you do with it?' 'Thank you very much. I've learnt about that.' 'Now, are you learning?' He came a month after I started and said, 'You've only got two months. You've got to learn. After that you're on your own. If you come into the ring after the three months I've given you and you can't bid for yourself, and you can't get what you want, it's your fault. I've given you a chance.' He really helped me. He was a man I loved. I really loved the man. Mungy Rolf was the best thing that ever happened to me.

That was what they called the Hard. There was nothing there, that came straight off the beach. In there [an arch] was where they used to store their fish, and in that side was all the ice, refrigeration, that's how it used to be, the refrigeration there. All along here used to be the stores of the ladies who used to have their winkles and cockles and mussels and everything else. They had proper little stalls, you know, they used to fold them up and take them down and they used to have some canvas over the top. They used to 'fridge' it [ice]. They used to make it, electricity, like your fridges, that's how they used to ... but there used to be a van that used to come down and used to have the big blocks of ice. They had great big clippers, double-clippers, that used to catch hold of each side of the block of ice and tip it over and then they used to break it up and don't forget they used to put salt with the ice - saltpetre. To keep it going. They used to get hold of a handful and sling it in as they put in, on the boxes of fish, and when it used to melt, the salt was still sort of preserving it. The firm that used to make it was at the top of Holland Road, right at the top at the crossroads. It was on that corner and it was the Lightfoot Refrigeration Company and they used to supply all the Brighton ... all the hotels used him. 'Course you had no fridges or anything else in those days.

Rene & John Taylor

Queenie: Of course, there were no fridges in those days. We had ice boxes. So you had to try and sell it all. And at the end of the day, you more or less tried to get rid of all the fish at so much a crate.

Roger: We used to buy blocks of ice down the Municipal Market. I don't know how much it was.

Queenie: 'Bout one and thruppence.

Roger: 'Bout one and thruppence, was they? My dad used to say, 'Go and get a barrow,' and he'd give me a sack, and then you'd have to go all the way down there and this blooming great block of ice. You'd be slipping everywhere. And if it didn't go in the

road, you could just about pick it up, me being a boy, like. I could just about pick it up and chop it all into pieces, and put it on your fish to keep it overnight.

'Queenie' Foster & Roger Harding

They used to have to pack up about half past nine, ten o'clock and then start clearing the market up. Scrubbing it down and icing the fish what hadn't been sold away, ice that down and all that. For the next day. Kept them there, iced 'em down and put 'em in the cold store, under the arches. You used to go in there, you used to scrub that Hard down every morning with a hose and brooms - the blokes who looked after the Market.

'Big Ted' Gillam

Roger: And then ... who was the bloke? Was it Leno, was Leno his name? I remember him ... Leno.

Queenie: Yes, Leno. Tall and thin

Roger: Very rough and rugged chap. And he had a bloody great hosepipe. He'd come along afterwards and sprayed it everywhere, and it was cleaner then than what it ever is now, the way they used to wash it all down, course they were really fussy. But it was all over by about nine o'clock. If you got there by nine o'clock, there was nothing. That was your lot! Anything left over would be packed away and put in them big fridges they had down there. That was a lovely old place, that was. I used to like going down there with my dad. He'd often say to me, 'Get a handful of them sprats, and go down on the beach and feed the seagulls.' I don't know whether he wanted to get rid of me or give me something to do! And then we used to go up Cecil's [a cafe under the Arches] and get a cup of tea and a bacon roll.

Queenie' Foster Roger Harding

Barbara: That was a great tourist attraction that was, the old Fishmarket, wasn't it?

Ted: Yeah. They was put up in the town. And that went, well it just finished didn't it, collapsed. That was the worst day's work the Corporation ever done. They offered that place up in the town first, didn't they, Circus Street, yes. Course we had to move up there and it was all arguments and one thing and another, lorries was interfering with the fruiterers and it ended up most of them packed it up, the old fish salesmen.

Barbara & 'Big Ted' Gillam

The closure of the seafront during the Second World War resulted in space being allocated to the town's fish salesmen in the Circus Street wholesale fruit market. With the ending of hostilities Mr John Leach, the fishermen's secretary, who was later to receive the M.B.E for his services to the industry, led the fishermen back to their rightful home on the old Fishmarket stade.

With the progress of time, under a ruling that the old Fishmarket and its drainage system were unhygienic, the Council condemned it and had the salesmen reluctantly moved back to Circus Street into purpose-built premises, regardless of the fishermen's protest.

Jimmy Howell

It was wrong for them to destroy it because it was an attraction. You could go down there and you could watch them sell the fish, different in those days I admit, but they shot the fish on the deck, on the Hard, and they sold them in piles, where again you had to be a good judge to how much fish were in that.

Joe Mitchell

To my mind the Fishmarket was one of the centres of Brighton. It was the centrepin of the seafront. It was done for political reasons to get it away. Anyone can tell you the number of people who used to sit down on the seafront from all the hotels, the Ship and the Grand as they are now, or the Metropole, people used to get up there, it was a character thing of Brighton. They used all these new health regulations as a lever to get the fishermen off Brighton beach and they're still trying to.

Dave May

The hotels made a complaint. The smell, the smell of the 'ard but that 'ard was scrubbed down every day but they kept on and on and they moved them out 1960 or 1962 when they went into Circus Street. And now they want a bloody Fishmarket there, don't they. Who they gonna sell the fish to then?

'Cow Heel' Andrew

Queenie: [The other 'Old Market'] was the same where it is now, not on the Level ...

Roger: Marshall's Row, that was the proper name of it.

Queenie: It was a straight market like that [draws on the table].

Roger: It used to go down, and you used to have stalls on either side, all the way down.

Queenie: And then they altered that, to go to the 'Fish Alley'. In them times there was how many fishmongers? There was Burgess's, Kelly's, Mum, then over the road was Jack Mitchell, then you'd come down to the other Mitchell, Mr Mitchell, the old one, he had a double stall, and then there was two Streeters over the other side. They had a double stall. And then there was Rolf's down the bottom, Cyril Rolf, and there was another one, who was that? Anyway, there was all those fishmongers then, wasn't there?

Roger: We had two in there, didn't we?

Queenie: Yes, and when his [Roger's] father got married, you see, my mum and dad said they couldn't really give him a wage for a married man, so he had the stall opposite. So we had two stalls in there then. And we had two stalls right up to a little

while ago in another market. Because my brother came back from the war, and he took over that stall, didn't he? He took over Mum and Dad's stall. And dad carried on his which you've got.

Roger: They had a market in Oxford Street, didn't they?

Queenie: Yes, that was before the Level.

Roger: That was before the Level.

Queenie: Yes, but I don't know that one. That was before my time. I know the one in the Level because we used to go and play on the swings and look over the railings to see Mum and Dad then.

Roger: So there was Oxford Street first. Then they must have moved into the Level, when granddad had it. Then they moved over to where it is, called Marshall's Row, where we had the stalls on either side, didn't we? And I can remember being in there when they started to build what they called the New Market, and they cut it in half, didn't they, and they put it up near Rose Hill, on the car park, used to be an old car park there. So they had half the market up there, and half down where it is now, sort of thing. Then, obviously, as they built the new part, the ones that were first out went into the new ones and vice versa with the older ones, over onto the car park, and then they built the other bit. I don't think it is such a good layout now as what it was years ago, when people used to walk straight down and could look either side.

Queenie: The customers ... don't walk right round on a 'figure eight' now. They just come down one side. And you lose a lot of customers like that, don't you.

Roger: Yes, and there's not enough variety in there now. That's what it is.

'Queenie' Foster & Roger Harding

When they had, I don't think they do a lot of it now, what they call home fish, the uffal, the fish that didn't go to the market, they used to put that on the back of the bus in a sack, all the old gibber used to run down the back of the bus, all this like a lot of, well, to put it politely, like a lot of snot! That was how you used to get it home, wasn't it? And they used to deliver it.

Barbara Gillam

Home fish, what you used to take home. 'Knock a bit out there.' My father's boots used to come home all full of scales where he used to kick out so much fish, like that, and the convent ladies, the nuns, used to come down with their great big capes and all that, and inside there they've got laced down with great big bags, and they used to tip the fish in the bag for them.

Rene Taylor

Roger: You used to see it happen. They'd tip a box of fish over or something like that, you know, and as I say, they'd put it on the scale, and as they tipped it over, a couple'd go down the back, under the scale or something like that. That was for later. That was their little bit of bunce. Or if they was weighing up, doing the scallops. They'd tip the

bags out on the floor, and I always remember my dad saying, 'Make sure you always get the right amount.' Because they used to count them out in fours, but sometimes they might only pick three up and throw them in there, but the other one was for him, you see. So you'd get your number, but what was left over was his. We'd get up the market, and Dad would say, 'Count them all up again, and make sure you've got your number.' And another stunt there was, was when we used to buy a two stone box of fish, Dad always used to say, 'You make sure you have the first stone out of it, because the second stone won't weigh a stone. You won't get your weight out of it.' Because they used to leave that bit in there and say there was a stone left, 'That's yours.' But when you'd weigh it up, it'd be thirteen pounds. 'Where's that other pound gone to then?' So you'd lost that, and in that way, they'd have had you. But most of the sweepers, I suppose, you could say they were poorly paid.

Queenie: Yes, they were, but they relied on that basis.

Roger: But I suppose it started off years ago when they never had any work. They used to go down there and muck in, and that little bit of fish they took home to give to their families, originally. That was it, you know, what they called their 'bunce'.

Roger Harding & 'Queenie' Foster

When the men had a good catch of fish, they'd come home with it all in the buckets, and they'd clean it and wash it off and make a plate or a dishful up, and then the wives used to take it around the pubs, and they'd sell it in the bar, sixpence a plate, so they'd get a big plate of fresh fish for sixpence. The wives did that. I can remember them doing that.

My grandmother went down to the Fishmarket, got her fish down there, where I suppose my dad and my granddad had been fishing, and they'd come ashore with their catch. And I suppose that's where she got hers from. And then she would take it all around the streets in this little pushcart, you know, well, barrow, my dad made it for her, because the others were too big and heavy. He made her a little light one. And she used to go around Carlton Row and William Street, Henry Street, John Street, all up Carlton Hill, Nelson Street, all those streets. And then she'd - the people who couldn't afford to buy their fish - she used to have her little book, and we'd go around Fridays and people used to pay her, you know, she used to say what I used to call 'mace it', you know what that means? Can I have it on the mace, can I have it and pay later. And they'd put it on the book. And I used to go around with my gran Fridays and she'd get the money that they owed her. Had to do it to keep the family going.

Doris Watherington

Yeah, well, our fish was brought into the market, and was sold in the market, and if we, if there was a glut of fish like, and it was not a very good day for boating, I had a small motor, a small van and that, which I had as a ... and I used to put herrings, probably about twenty stone of herrings - buy them at about two shillings a stone - about twenty stone of herring on the back of my motor, and go up in the country and sell them. You know, Burgess Hill, Hassocks, Keymer, all round that area, Haywards Heath. And of

course, there was the small plaice, and that. I didn't do it very often, because it didn't - according to the weather and that - if the weather was fine, you had your own work to do, go out on the boats, and go round fishing. But if it was a little bit rough, you might - not very many days, you'd probably get about one, maybe two days, if it's bad weather, during the week, and that might go - you might have one week, and then you might go 'bout two three weeks before you get another couple days like that. But it was only just a case of a sort of a fall back if you wanted a few extra shillings a week, see. But, of course, all your main fishing, from your own boats, was taken up most of your time during the winter, like.

Ted Watherington

The only problem I did have was when I was trying to go fishing, I wanted to sell what fish we'd landed at Brighton Fishmarket and was then told I couldn't do that unless I belonged to the Brighton Fishermen's Association. So if I joined that I'd be okay to sell whatever amount, great or small, in Brighton Fishmarket. I then enquired how one joined the Brighton Fishermen's Association and was told that I had to be proposed by a member of the Association. I then explained that I didn't know anybody in the Association and I wanted to go in there as an individual, and I didn't know anybody. I didn't know any of the fishing families then, and didn't particularly want to spend time in pubs currying favour with people just to get in the Association, I didn't see that that was warranted. Which I didn't. I mean, you know, and that's how a lot of people do get on, they go and they drink with someone or make sure they're in the same places as them and all that sort of nonsense. I don't subscribe to that at all. So the result was that I couldn't sell fish anywhere in Brighton Fishmarket. I couldn't join the Association because I didn't know anybody.

I had to hawk it around to people or sell it to people in the pub, and of course this was not very practicable because when you come back from fishing you've only got one evening and then you've got maybe to go to work the next day so you've got to get rid of it. And a lot of people seem to think that because you went to the sea and got fish that you got it for nothing and would expect to pay very little for it. Like my local publican at the time was always asking when he could have cheap lobsters or crabs. I did point out that when he could give me cheap pints of Guinness or whatever! He didn't see the joke, or the irony of it. That was the Oak pub in St. James' Street which was just up from where I lived. I lived at New Steine at the time.

Peter Richards

Ted: When we was at Newhaven, when I was first started, of course you could sell the undersized stuff what you can't sell now, the small dabs and small plaice. I used to go round the town at Newhaven, get your uffal pocket money like. Sell your uffal, small fish. And I should think that Newhaven used to eat more fish than any town in the world. Because you could go round there all day, you'd still sell out, if there was two or three of you running around. We had them in a box or basket. Through the streets I went, 'Sand

dabs alive, sand dabs alive-oh!' And they used to come out, threepence and a tanner a plate.

Dave: Do you remember Ted Gillam, my dad's dad?

Ted: I must have known him.

Dave: We used to remember him when we was kids, having a walk along Queens Park Road, selling winkles, herring, mackerel, with a barrow.

'Big Ted' Gillam & Dave Gillam

Oh yeah, we used to go around with my dad's sister Bet - Elizabeth, but we call her Betsy. Her husband, his name was Bill Newman, he had a little pony and trap, little cart with a little horse - Ginny - he would fill up with fish, and, you know, smoked and fresh, and then, I told you, she would fry the fish, they make their own batter up, deep fry the fish, and they'd lay it in big trays with the greaseproof paper. And he'd take that up into the country, all in Bolney, Hickstead, those villages up that way. And then they would sell it like that, already cooked. He used to stay in the pub and have a few pints, you know, and a lot of times the old horse brought him home, she knew the way home. Sometimes he used to be like this and Ginny used to bring Bill home.

Doris. Watherington

The best I ever did was about five or six boxes of cod. It was a freak catch. One Saturday, I'd shot the nets fairly close in behind the King Alfred. I knew there was a patch of rock there, I didn't know exactly where they were, and I must have had about two hundredweight, three hundredweight of cod. Obviously, a shoal had come in and they were there. And I remember quite clearly, couldn't hawk that around quite obviously, so someone said they'd just shift them for me and I got thirty quid for that lot. Which was not a lot even at that time for that amount of fish.

Peter Richards

Oh, the best price of fish in them days was - well, exclude salmon, because the most money in them days - see, it all depends on the length of the season - see, you get summertime, plaice and sole always fetch their money, which they do now; but in them days when I'm talking about, see I've caught bass and sold them for five and half p. - that's old money - a pound. Five and a half p., so that's you might as well say three pence, three pence. Now how much they worth today! To go and buy them today you've got to pay four pounds a pound! That's only since after the War up till now. The other thing is it's all or nothing, know what I mean? See, as I told you when my son was, before he went to Guernsey, we went seining one night - you might think I'm pulling your leg - so we goes away this night, we caught half a ton, half a ton of mullets! It's true!

Bobby Andrew

Any drift fish is a bad fish because there is no great demand for them. Any fish like the mackerel, herring and sprat, there is not a great deal of demand once everybody is catching them and you are chasing everywhere trying to sell them. In fact at one stage during my career as a fisherman we had so many in an hour of the herring we filled a five cubic yard tip-up lorry with them, put them on the old Fishmarket and then looked like running into trouble with the Herring Board because the salesmen couldn't sell them and they were being sold for two shillings a stone when in fact they should have been sold at a standard price, a price fixed by the Herring Board of the day of three shillings and fourpence.

Jimmy Howell

A fisherman he gets a very poor price for his fish - for what you see in the shop. You take plaice at the present time. You can find plaice, medium plaice, for about six or seven pound a stone. But, you go to a fish shop now, you'll find one pound forty to one pound fifty a pound. It's very expensive these days.

I would never encourage - if I knew as much as I know now, if I was a young ... - I would never encourage my son or grandsons to go fishing.

Johnny Humphrey

Roger: And rock salmon ... they made us call it coley. Trade Descriptions Act, wasn't it? Kibblings were just like a small baby skate, and little dabs. You'd buy this lot, you'd sort it, go up the stall, tip it over and sort it all out. Skates, dabs, and spatters, which were little plaice. I can remember my dad going down there and buying all these little kibblings. They were just small skate. And you might have two or three stone of each or more, and you'd just put them up on the stall and put your ticket on them and sell them. But nowadays, people come up and they go, 'Oooh, I don't want that! It's too small.' ... Skate, they all want big wings, and it's all got to be skinned and trimmed. Whereas years ago, it used to come in more or less the whole thing. And Dad'd be standing up there, skinning and trimming. And a lot of fishmongers now, they don't know how to do it properly, you know, how to skin, to make it look what it should be.

Queenie: You need to boil 'em, the kibblings. You used to cut the middles out and they had the little wings. But people used to fry 'em so crispy you could eat the bones of them. And herrings we used to sell no end, years ago. Now they say, 'Oh no, my husband won't eat the bones.' Or I should have to fillet it. But personally I think you get more bones in filleted herrings than what you do if you eat it ordinary, 'cos you can see the bones better. And I'll tell you another thing, Sunday mornings, breakfast, it was nearly always smoked haddocks or kippers. You'd have fish breakfasts, Sunday mornings. I suppose because they had more time to eat it. We used to have loads of smoked haddocks, what you'd call Finnan haddocks these days. We used to sell no end of those on a Saturday.

Roger: The big gurnets, they're called 'tough gunners'. And you'd put them all up and off you'd go. And people would come up and they'd have three or four pound at a time.

Nowadays they come up, everything's got to be filleted or cleaned and that. Years ago they'd just take it all away and do it themselves, all the old dears ... The customers now just don't want anything small. It's like kippers. You'd sell boxes of kippers but now they say, 'I can't have kippers! They've got too many bones. And they make my kitchen stink.' Or they've got to be fillets in a bag with a bit of butter in them now, that sort of thing. That's the way things have changed. And we get a lot of ... sort of monkfish. We get now, what we never had years ago, a lot of, but it's not monkfish really. That Fanny Craddock give it that name, didn't she? What was the other name of that fish? An angler fish.

Queenie: That's it. An angler fish. With a great big head on it.

Roger: Yeah, angler fish is the correct name. Now a monkfish, we used to call them - well the auctioneer used to have them caught, you know, he might occasionally have one here or one there - he used to call them 'cellos'. Old Mungy Rolf, he used to hold 'em up and say, 'I've got a couple of cellos here.' Because that was the shape of them. Like a big cello. They had big wings on them, and like a long tail. Now that is a proper monkfish. And not many fishmongers could do them, but my dad used to buy them and I used watch him do them. And you used to have to skin every bit with a knife. You'd have to run the knife up and skin it. And I used to watch him and he used to be an artist with it. And you'd get four wings off of it and that used to be skate. My dad [would say], 'Cut them up, cut them into portions, that's a bit of skate,' and then there used to be a bit of huss, and what have you. You could get away with it in them days, because this Trades Description Act wasn't in force like it is now. You can't do it now.

Roger Harding & 'Queenie' Foster

We smoked our own kippers, trout, haddock and salmon. And the smokehouse was directly out of the back of our bedroom, and the chimney was only eight feet above our window. We used oak as fuel. We used just brine and oak. I still do it now, behind my present premises. In the old days all the walls would be blacked with tar. Twelve feet by ten was a small smokehouse. You did your smoking at night. The layers of tar built up over the years gave a flavour to the fish. The flavour comes from the carbon on the walls. You're getting a good finish on your product. A good product comes from what's on those walls. People who produce inferior kippers now dip the fish in a colorant with a flavouring, then they just dry them out. Apart from that you can buy a flavouring you spray on. They use the same flavouring for smoked bacon, meat or fish. But it's not done properly. There's no other way to do it. I'd never use anything like that. It has to be done properly. I'm not a pushy person so I don't advertise that I smoke the fish myself. I prefer word of mouth. No more than that. I could spend a fortune on advertising, but I'm a small man, not a big man. I'm not going to start advertising.

Kevin O'Connor

That's how they were you know, they were hard people. I can remember little instances that stay in your mind: skinning a huss, like a dogfish, and I was twelve years old, and as I pulled the skin it was absolutely freezing. I pulled it, the icicles dropped from it, not

frozen, it was a fresh one, that's how cold it was! And my father said, 'What's the matter son, your hands cold?' I said, 'They're freezing!' He said, 'Well rub 'em in that ice, that'll bring 'em to!' He wasn't being unkind! That's how they were.

Joe Mitchell

We gutted them - plaice, soles, anything like that - because the buyers say, 'You're leaving all the guts in the fish, that's all weight.' If you gutted them, if the fish was gutted properly, and laid in boxes properly, they used to say, 'It's a nice [smell], what's that fish?'

Ted Watherington

Whoever was standing there [cleaned the fish]! You had your workmen, sometimes some of the ladies that used to have the huts and all that down there to sell their shrimps and mussels and winkles and that sort of thing, they used to come, they'd tuck their old apron up, tuck it on the side and get hold of a knife and start cleaning whatever fish that they wanted. But the fish that used to go to the shops, naturally those people used to clean their own fish.

Rene Taylor

The other thing we had to do early in the morning was to get the copper going, and clear all the ashes out, break the ice on the old tub, get the water and put it in the copper. Then we used to go down and get any old fish boxes and what have you. We had to smash everything up to feed the boiler to get it going. Then the crabs, or lobsters, or winkles, or whelks would be cooked up. You'd go down and buy them at the auction. Winkles, you'd have what you'd call a 'Winkle Man'. You'd get a regular bloke who'd go out along the rocks and pick your winkles for you. I've got one now, who comes in. Picks my winkles for me.

Roger Harding

Well, you take we'll say, the Dover sole, it's still a very high priced fish - it always was, but the original cause of the high price was the fact of its keeping qualities. If you caught a Dover sole today, that Dover sole would still be in good condition - without refrigeration, I'm talking about - in ten days. And in the old days before the rail, it commanded a very high price because it would travel inland in the old coaching days. But it's maintained that price by habit I think, because there are many fish better than the Dover sole, I think!

And you take the mackerel. It's still the only fish by law you're allowed to sell on a Sunday, and the reason for that is because mackerel were caught mainly either by seining or drifting.

Joe Mitchell

Roger: You started to get a lot of foreign fish on the market you know, which was quite nice and you could make a bit of a show of that. I tried all that, and it didn't go too bad, but that's dwindled out. The price of that's gone up so much now. I've had angel fish, fresh tuna, one time I was getting these great big swordfish, they was massive, I had one, must have been nearly twelve foot long, from nose to tail. We had some flying fish.

Queenie: But you took more time telling people what they were, instead of selling them.

Roger: Yeah, but it was a good draw, a good attraction. Oh, I've had barracuda. They're excellent to eat, they're lovely. 'Cos I have to try all these things. And trigger fish. I've had lumpsuckers.

Queenie: Tried caviar, didn't we, the lumpsucker caviar? But it didn't sell.

Roger Harding & 'Queenie' Foster

The other day a nineteen-year-old girl came into my shop with a baby aged three, wanting some fish for him and she'd never eaten fish herself. Her parents never served it, but she'd heard fish was good for children, so you're getting another generation coming up, but it'll stop, it won't continue. The girl suggested Dover sole, but I said, 'It's too hard to digest for a child. Cod is good for children.' I sold her a cod tail and gave her a herring roe. People of thirty to thirty-five buy squid et cetera that they've tried on holiday, but the young people don't want to.

In the old days squid et cetera was used as crab bait and not sold in the shops. When I took over from George Watts in George Street I can remember that I could buy monkfish at three old pence per pound. It was sold as cat fish. They had very healthy cats in them days!

Kevin O'Connor

Queenie: You know, the fish trade is definitely declining. Trouble now is if they don't come in the market, you can't sell it. They're just not coming down the London Road. They just won't come around just to buy fish, or even a little bit of greengrocery. I don't think they actually took the fish trade away, the supermarkets, it's just they've taken the people away. It's just convenience for people. They can pop it under the grill, they don't have to wet their hands washing it or doing anything to it, but I still think, on the whole, people are not eating the fish as what they did years ago. Years ago fish was a cheap dinner. They'd stand there and they'd cook all this fish, and they'd sit, and they didn't mind bones, and they'd have a good old blow-out. Now they come up and say, 'Well, it's not a cheap dinner now.'

Roger: And I believe so much of it now is exported, and another thing that when people go out to dinner, in the evening, they tend to eat fish then, rather than buy it, because half of them don't know how to cook it, see, so it's a treat. They'll go and pay about seven pounds or eight pounds for a Dover sole when they go out. But when they come up to me, you say like, a nice sole for about four quid or so, 'Oh dear.'

Queenie: But no end of them ask us how to cook it, don't they, now? I think they should make a bit more of it on the television. Sainsburys is doing it a bit now. But they used to souse them a lot, years ago. You don't have people doing it now. They put them in a big dish, and put vinegar in, they used to have what we call synthetic vinegar, it wasn't the pure malt vinegar. They used to make it up. And they used that vinegar, salt and pepper, and put it in the oven, there might be a bay leaf, if they was rich enough to buy one, and souse them. Then they could have them hot, or cold, you know. You don't hear of people doing it now. And I don't know whether you can still buy that vinegar. It's mostly Sarsons vinegar people buy now. And you have to add some ordinary water with that, otherwise it would be too strong a taste for the fish.

Roger: Years ago when the mackerel season started, like all things, they never had these processing plants, or what have you, so when they came in they came in thick and fast, so you had to knock them out, especially if your competitors had some as well. Then you'd think, 'Oh God, what am I going to do with all these?' Then the price'd get really rock-bottom, you were near enough giving them away. Especially if they was giving them away down the beach like they used to. Nowadays, see, you've got like smoked mackerel come on the scene in the last, what, ten years.

Queenie: There wasn't any fish stalls in Upper Gardner Street, but there used to be a fish shop in Gardner Street. Now what was his name? It was a big fat man. That finished, but it was right along by that Cork Shop in Gardner Street. Then there was one right opposite Gardner Street, that was Gowers - he's gone. That was a very big shop, and they used to do wholesale until recently. And lobsters, didn't they, Gowers? They used to have that for the restaurants. But that's gone. There's just not the trade in the fresh fish line nowadays. There used to be Macfisheries up there, on the corner where Churchill Square is now, but that went.

'Queenie' Foster & Roger Harding

You'll never find a rich fisherman

Well, all fishing, all the inshore fishing works on shares, and you take expenses out. It depends, it varies quite a lot. Most open boats worked four shares, you got a fourth of a share, but before you shared up your money, the expenses come out of the whole, out of whatever amount of money you earned.

Well, when I first went, it was a little bit of a set thing. Diesel didn't come out, like the running diesel, but paraffin for your lamps did, which was a stupid thing really, because latter years we put diesel in the lamps and was even better because it didn't blow out so well, so easy. And it was a matter of two shillings a gallon I think, paraffin, and you probably only used two gallons the whole year, but that came out because that wasn't part of the running. The boat paid for that. But there are some cases you see now, or even then on the bigger boats, that they paid for their diesel, out of the whole. It just depends who and what you went with.

Most of our beach boats, like twenty-foot odd boats, mostly shared a quarter, like you know twenty-five percent. Your fish carting had to come out of that. But then, like I say, we had motors then, but before like you had to pay for the fish to be carted in. Just trying to think what else, your stamp money come out, to start with, and then, depending what owner you had, you know, you got some that were very, very tight, and some that if you had a bad week they'd probably split the money down the middle, or not take any expenses. But there are cases of boats in Newhaven at the time, sixties, perhaps coming up to the seventies, where some boats made eleven shares. Some of the bigger boats do now. They call it percentages now.

But it's all a little bit, each boat's slightly different. This is the same the whole way round the country. Even on your National Insurance stamps is a share fishermen's stamp. So this is the same right throughout the whole country. There were only perhaps Hull and Grimsby and Fleetwood that had people on contract, which were employed people. But even then they generally got a wage and a percentage of the gross. But like I say most inshore or all, you could more or less say, without the odd exception, all the inshore people worked on a share. Which was really the only way it could survive because if you got paid your, it doesn't matter, whatever, if you got paid a wage you wouldn't be so keen to go, would you? If you didn't, if you went and got a nice bit of fish you'd be keen to go again to get some more like. If you was on a wage it wouldn't matter to you whether you got anything or not.

Alan Hayes

In the older days - before my time - the wives used to go down and draw off the owners, something like ten bob a week for their wages, and then square it up when they'd finish. The wives used to, of the fishermen who worked on the boats. Supposing they were fishing way down Plymouth or something, they'd square up when they shared. Because they never worked for a wage, they worked for a share. The owner took a share, and the boat took a share. They'd only get a share of what was sold.

Joe Mitchell

It worked on a share basis. My father-in-law was the owner of the boats, and he used to take shares for the boat, two shares out for the boat, that was the shares that paid for the oil. And then we used to have a share each, of what was left, like.

But when we was boating, and that, used to do the same thing there. Used to take two shares out for the boat, whatever boat we was using, and the rest of the money we would share between the crews. So if eight of you was working two boats, we'd take four shares out for the boat - half of it - and the other half of the earnings used to be shared out amongst the crew.

We'd have what we used to call our allowances which was for - at the time I was smoking ... From the little bit that we did earn she [his wife] had to keep house and couple of kids and that, see. But we managed.

Ted Watherington

Well, generally it [the share-out] used to be always on a Saturday morning, just in the motor or on the beach or wherever you were. You always picked your money up on a Saturday morning, which was a bit hard for your missus at the time, but once you'd sort of gone a couple of weeks it wasn't so bad. Nearly everybody shared up on a Saturday because your week went Monday to Friday, which it doesn't now, but, so therefore you ended up with your money on a Saturday. I think a lot of them used to go in the pub and do it, by the Monday they'd start all skint again, but that's the way that was.

Alan Hayes

Before the War if you made three pound for all night, that wasn't too bad. Fifty bob, three pound, four pounds, sometimes less than that. When I first used to go. Oh, never banked it, didn't know what that was. Well, you had to just save along a bit, as the weeks went by. We got along alright, we always get along with it alright. Well, if there was two of you, you made four shares. Two shares for the boat and a share each for the crew. If there were was three of you, you'd make five shares and the boat would be cut down then, it'd only have two shares.

The small fish you caught what you gave - what we called the heavens-up - the blokes who got on the bar and go round and round and heave the boats up the beach. It's funny though, the old things we used to have to do. If there was four of them hauled up, you know, walking round this bar, like me, when I was a young one, I used to have to make the lots out, say four lots of the fish, small fish, five or six lots sometimes. And then you'd have to take your hat off, put it behind your head like this [so he can't see it], and they'd all put something in your hat, you'd not know what it is. And then, you had to pick it out and throw that on that one - on that lot - whoever's fish it was, that was theirs. Whatever that momentum they had, that was their lot. So there was no arguing. Most of them was old blokes finished work, you know. Some youngsters used to come down, but I mean they never got down of a morning because they had to go to school like. But I was one of the blokes that used to get up and make sure I get down there. They laugh at me, the fellows down here, but we had to do it, we all done it, when we was working down here. They had their fair dos, yes. When I was the youngest one I never used to get no fish, I didn't, because it was my father's boat, or my grandfather's boat.

'Big Ted' Gillam

See, once a fish went on the market that was the fish salesman's responsibility. And in the herring season and the mackerel season, you used to fish for the whole season and our mothers used to go down to the fish salesman every week and they would get a ten shilling sub. So at the end of the season - we'll say it lasted ten weeks - I've earned fifteen pounds for that ten weeks - the fish salesman would say, 'Well, you've had ten

bob a week subs for ten weeks,' that's five pound, so I get ten pound back. He would stop your money and he would get his first.

Johnny Humphrey

One of the fellas who was on the beach had a small row boat, he used to ferry them out to the boats and then they would go fishing. He never used to charge. Well, they used to give him - alright in them days it wasn't more than sixpence. Or next morning they used to come in, give him a bit of fish, see.

See, everybody got a living in them days. In them days you only earned about two pounds, two or three pound a week. Well, it all depends what catch you got see; when we used to go seining, we could go and have a night's fishing and earn, say, ten to twelve shillings; well, that was a lot of money in them days, the 1930s, I mean to say. You got by on it, but you couldn't say you got it every day, because the weather was against us; see, seining you had to wait till the weather was fine before you could go out fishing on the beaches.

Bobby Andrew

At that time, I mean they're different now because money's different, it wasn't too bad. I don't know what the average was. There was what you call 'National Assistance' but we never, no, no. But then in those days, when we were first married our wages were about three pound a week, I mean you could keep the kids on three quid a week then.

Barbara Gillam

Well, them days you never used to settle up until all your gear was away. When you finished the season you had to go down, dry it all off, and then when all the gear was away that was when you got paid out for that season. The reason why, because if you got your money before it was dried off, and you was offered a little job ashore, you used to take it and the other people was left with the gear to put away.

And years ago, before my time, the fish salesmen used to buy the boats for the fishermen and they used to go to sea and what they call 'work 'em out'. So, if you had a good season, the fish salesman would say, 'Well, I'll take fifty pounds off the boat,' so that would knock fifty pounds off your debt, until you'd paid for your boat. Well, a lot of them never did pay for their boats, never earned the money to pay for their boats. Now, my father, he did actually pay for his boats. He had the Paragon and the Smiling Morn, but he earned it and paid the fish salesman.

Well, this fish salesman, Alfred Gunn, he paid a hundred pounds for this boat. Which was a lot of money in them days. And he had a shop in Sydney Street near the Green Dragon [pub], and all the crewmen went up there to his office to settle up. Well, there was my brother, myself, and my sister at home - we were all at school. And went up

there and shared the money out, so much you've earned, and it works out so much a man. Of course, my dad was paying off the boat - he had a hundred pounds to come. And this fish salesman put the hundred pounds on the front of the table and, 'I'll give you your quota,' and 'the other men their quota,' and he took the hundred pounds away - he said to my dad, 'Well, the boat's paid for, Bill, now.' And my old mother never had a ha'penny over to Christmas.

Johnny Humphrey

I don't think you will ever make a fortune at fishing. Not the way we go fishing, in the smaller boats. The bigger boats do a different thing altogether. It is literally what you call a living and that's it. You get your odd good weeks and your weeks when you earn nothing. It evens itself out.

John Gillam

Ted: When there was a glut of herring - you was buying herring then for two shillings and a half a crown a stone, which is fourteen pound of fish. Now you gotta pay anything up to seventy-eighty pence a pound for the herrings that you're buying now. It's the same thing with the mackerel. Local cooked mackerel straight off the beach - used to buy them straight from the nets for about a penny each. Now, you buy mackerel, gotta pay about sixty-seventy pence a pound for them. It's the same with plaice. The stuff they brought in from Rye and that, if they didn't sell it today, at three shillings a stone or something like that, tomorrow that fish would be sold again, it would be on the market tomorrow, they'd be iced up for tomorrow; now that fish tomorrow would come out for resale and that and they'd probably fetch about, instead of three shillings a stone, they'd probably fetch about two shillings a stone.

It's the outsiders, the shops, the middlemen. By the time the fishermen takes his fish there and the salesman sells his fish, he gets his percentage on the sale. Gotta pay a levy on it. If we say for argument's sake, a boat's catch comes to about a hundred pound, the whole lot, well, by the time the salesman takes his share out of it, that fisherman's only going to get half that money. That is how it's happening now. That's the reason why now, everything's become so expensive now, the oil's gone up, they're still not getting their rights

Doris: You'll never find a rich fisherman. But I bet anyone on the wholesale side's doing alright.

Ted & Doris Watherington

Andrew: It's getting worse, because the trawler owners nowadays get more and more money out of it and they think, 'Oh well, I just buy another one and I'll get more money.'

John: It's only the owner that actually gets the money out of them. And they can just keep going. The crew get shares.

John: But they are on a pittance - two per cent I think.

Andrew: That's why they probably end up with no more than what we do.

John: But you've got to remember their turnover is greater, but when they're at sea for seven days and seven nights, their actual money comes down to something like fifty pence an hour, I think, on these big boats, but they look on it as the fact that when they're out there they're not spending anything. All they are doing is banking their money because they don't get time to spend it.

John & Andrew Gillam

There are a lot of undersize fish being caught these days. This is not right see, because you mustn't land it. They do work with undersize nets, the French were always on undersized net.

Well, the point is they got in all these ports ... they've all got a Fishery Officer, he keeps in touch with all the fishermen, and he knows the size of fish that a man's caught and landed. It might be him, it might be him, it might be him [gestures]. When you land your fish, all your fish is sold in the market, all your fish is weighed and sold, it's regulated, and if it's undersized, you were fined. Rogers his name was, see?

What I'm trying to tell you now, if you landed fish under say ... a small one, see? You took it down to the market, the Fishing Officer used to be there. If there was a female lobster, they were never allowed to land them. They had all these red berries down here on the chest. It was the only way you could tell the difference, they've got red berries. They should have been thrown back, but we used to scrub off the red berries so they looked like males.

Dick Taylor

I was the Officer for twenty-one years and I think I didn't know in the first instance what I was taking on really. I took the job on just on my own, nobody else and I had virtually a hundred miles of coastline and my jurisdiction really was from Hayling Island eastwards to Dungeness Point and it extended three miles seaward. That was the old limit, the three-mile limit and that limit still stands today in this area actually, but I was just one man on my own. No boat, nothing. I soon discovered I had taken on the near-impossible task of carrying out the lone enforcement of the fishing regulations in my district, which included enforcement of minimum fish sizes and various types of net mesh size. I soon ascertained that the unlawful landing of undersized fish was rife. I carried out numerous prosecutions especially for the landing of undersized fish including lobsters. It soon dawned on me what a massive task I was doing.

Jimmy Howell

When they was altering the limits, I'm not quite sure of the date, you'll find it was the sixties I believe, most of our boats were trammelling and we used to trammel then out to about the six-mile limit. At the time I was with a chap named Peter Durkin, we had a

boat called the Skylark, it was one of the Leaches' old boats. We found we went out to sea, there was various Belgian beamers, beam trawlers which are a popular means of fishing now, which literally towed our nets away. Even people like the Leaches who own the beamers now, they used to be trawlers, and they lost gear, we all lost gear on that occasion by this boat, I think it was called the Savane. We called the coastguard up and they got hold of the fishery protection boat. They sent up a boat called the Tenacity which was a new Navy ship. One of the beamers was literally caught on a wreck that was inside the six-mile limit but no effort was made whatsoever to ever prosecute. It was shrugged off, not to rock the boat with the Common Market as far as the fishing was concerned in them days.

Dave May

But the only way we could see to safeguard ourselves - and all this at the time was going in talking about the Common Market - was to try and get some legislation to either stop or keep out these Belgian beam trawlers which was at the time a harassment to our gear. This was with the Peace & Plenty, '70 to '75, '76. And it came about through, I don't think particularly by us, but it suited us, that we were going to ban beam trawling, which, we didn't want to stop our own people but it was a way of perhaps stopping these Belgian boats from fishing near our gear, although having said that they never ever once really touched us, as far as we know. Anyway, we had petitions and one thing and the other to try and ban beam trawling, or restrict it to further out than six miles.

Alan Hayes

I used to be the Chairman of the Brighton Fishermen & Boatmen's Protection Society, and I had been known for fighting for the fishing rights. We wanted a twelve-mile limit when we were going into the E.E.C., for instance, and that was prior to me taking on the job and we did go round to the Thames. We sailed round there with boats from the Channel coast and Devon along. We all mustered at Southend Pier and travelled up the Thames together. We then went on to Parliament and 10 Downing Street.

I was dedicated to the industry. I could see these Belgian beam trawlers coming for a start. They were the start of the beam trawling in this area. These massive great beams, I could see, were devastating the industry, in my opinion, and I started the campaign for that, which had the support of all the fishing here. Now, if you ask me, I would say that although I think that it [beam trawling] was a very efficient but cumbersome method of fishing, I have rather changed my tune now. I think that the netting is equally as devastating to the industry as is the beam trawling, because the fishermen now with their power blocks [powered net-haulers], which again is the ruination of the industry, I think that the power blocks coupled up with the nylon netting which doesn't rot, where now I think that the fishermen can haul as much net as they want in a day instead of just having to wait for slack tide, I think that that has been as much the ruination of the industry in this area as has the beam trawlers.

Jimmy Howell

Well, we had several demonstrations throughout that time. We blockaded Newhaven Harbour, which was in the spring when we were trammelling, and this was all boats from Hastings, Eastbourne, Shoreham, it was about April, somewhen or the other, and this was to do with entering the Common Market and to try and safeguard our limits. We were very concerned at the time and, although we have more local bye-laws now, that would slightly protect our small inshore boats a little bit against Belgian boats because I believe like this year or something they're virtually allowed to fish up to the shore. In '92 or '94 perhaps they will be allowed to fish up to the shore. Of course we're now going to have bye-laws to stop horse-power and bigger boats, which would curtail them because there is nothing to stop them, in 1994 I think it is, to come over in a boat my size - I mean that is a bit impractical - and fish alongside of me. In our water, and that's one of these things to do with the Common Market. But of course we've got local bye-laws now.

But we blockaded Newhaven Harbour for twenty-four hours, there was pictures in the paper and everything with it, that was, like I say all the boats, we'll say all the boats from Sussex, there was Rye boats, Hastings boats, Eastbourne boats.

There were a couple or three occasions we went to London to lobby - or if it wasn't lobbying Andrew Bowden or MPs, I think we went once to lobby, I'm not too sure - and we went to various other meetings in London. This was purely to try and stop beam trawlers, mainly it was Belgian boats it was aimed at, at the time.

Well, we were pressing, all the time this was going on, it is widely accepted all round the country and it still is that we've got the twelve-mile limit in England, but we haven't. We've only got a six-mile limit.

So while we're on the subject of Andrew Bowden, I think it was the election time when his opposition was Denis Hobden. So, because of all the help he'd given us and the work he'd done for us, I mean we met him, lobbied him in the Houses of Parliament, and as far as we could see we were going to get this beam trawling banned within perhaps twelve miles from the coast, but again at the time, I'm not too up with the politics, there was a General Election and it all got squashed and that was the end of it - the ban on the beaming. And apparently we were all set to do it, we had a little demonstration, as did Hastings and a few other places, and it just went by the board as the General Election come about.

Alan Hayes

The Brighton fishermen have never been united. But, in Hastings that's a different kettle of fish there. Oh, they're one for all, and all for one there. You upset one Hastings man and you upset the lot. The Hastings fishermen they have a lot of say as regarding

running the town. They dictate to the Council what to do, not the Council dictate to them. The Council is the people that's messed the Brighton fishing fraternity.

Johnny Humphrey

We fought tooth and nail against the Council. I always blame the Council, I have always felt that they certainly let the fishermen down very badly. They never supported them, as does the Hastings Borough Council, they are more like twin fishing towns, you understand. I felt that the fleet here could have been equally as big as the Hastings fleet. I mean, when I retired as the Officer, although they always claimed there were no fish, there was still a thriving fishing industry in Hastings, with forty-four boats on the stade there and here we've just got a handful of boats still, working out of Brighton Marina. Yes, I do blame Councils, each additional Council, for that, they should have done something for the fishermen many, many years ago, many decades ago, where the industry would have still been thriving in this town today as I see it.

Jimmy Howell

Andrew: I think that they ought to put more restrictions on bigger boats, personally.

John: With these beam trawlers, it becomes, I think a false economy, as far as, yes they do catch a lot of fish, but their expenses are absolutely astronomical, there's the insurance, you've got five or six crew on board, fishing gear, you're earning the money but you're putting a lot of it up the exhaust pipe.

Andrew: Last week their fuel bill for one boat was two thousand pound. But they're running seven days and seven nights.

John: And they're big engines, you know really big powerful things, and I think that is a false economy.

Andrew: If each boat's got five crew, so there's six people on each boat, I still reckon they'd still be better off with six small boats.

John: The farmers get a hell of a lot of subsidy, we get none whatsoever.

Andrew: If you're the farmer and he's told not to grow any more wheat, or whatever, he gets subsidised for that field, doesn't he? If they stop us from fishing then that's it, that's the end of the story.

The last two or three years it's happened, they've stopped us. They stopped us two years ago in July, so we had August, September, October, November, December to go before we could start our next one. [So we] change over and try and do something else.

John: Different method of fishing, try and catch something else.

Andrew & John Gillam

They were hard people to deal with. Years ago, when a fisherman went bankrupt, which they did do, they used to have an auctioneer in Brighton called Tully. He used to come down and the bailiffs would take all the gear out and it was auctioned on the beach. There was a boat come up, the Bonny Morn, and this Alf Gunn, a fish salesman, he bought this boat for my father to 'work out'.

Johnny Humphrey

Generally speaking, we have the odd mishap now, or even like then, there has been occasions when the whole fleet of nets have gone. Generally speaking, you retrieve some of them back, some part of the gear back, and it could actually finish you if you did get wiped out altogether. It would have done years ago, it would have finished us, because we didn't have the amount of gear. This is why we were so against, basically, the Belgian boats to start with.

Well, you wouldn't have been able to recover, you wouldn't have been able to replace your gear, you'd have been bankrupt, if that's the word. That would have been it for the season and if you hadn't had your season, you wouldn't have had any money to get your other nets with. Very rarely you say bankrupt, it's not a word people use, but that's what it means, it finished you.

Alan Hayes

Barbara: I mean it's a dying industry here. As a matter of fact, the oldest boy said to us, 'I don't think we shall make it this year.' That's how bad it is. Overfished, too many nets, there's thousands of nets out there, too much. How many nets did you have in your boat? Ted: About twenty.

Barbara: Well, these have thousands. They're forever making nets up, the whole day. I'll tell you what, if you were to go over to our youngest boy Andrew's now, they're making nets up. You go over again a different time tomorrow, he's making nets up, that's how it is all the time.

Barbara & 'Big Ted' Gillam

If you fished with the same amount of gear that my dad did, you literally wouldn't survive. You would not survive at all. It makes you wonder at times, but you just have to keep increasing your gear every year. You have to work more and more gear every year, so it is becoming harder work. I've come very, very close, I've come very close this year, I've lost four fleets this year, through beam trawlers.

I wouldn't have the money to be able to remake the nets, because of the way it's gone this year, it's been a bad year fishing because of the spider crabs, and then having those nets towed away. Anyway, obviously we've had to replace them but it's been a big struggle. You keep wondering, every day or every week, why am I doing this? But what else do you do? You go to sea the next day and you catch something and you might do alright, and then you think, this is why I'm doing it. It's the not knowing, I think. Every day is different.

John Gillam

We found that in the late fifties and early sixties, the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries & Food brought out a grant scheme where they would support qualified and bona fide fishermen to have a boat built and become his own property after a few years, like you buy a mortgage on a house. It worked out very well for many of the top-rate skippers. There was a lot of people of course that fell by the wayside because there was a particular amount of expense. It was not only the mortgage you had to pay for, the insurance was very heavy and there was a lot of expenses in respect to administration of it, which the owner or rather, the mortgagee of the boat had to supply. So it wasn't as rosy as it appeared on paper.

But we found in all that respect that our best skippers went forward for grant and loan, and that meant to say that you got second-class people in your own ships. Like everything else in life when you've got second and third-class people the profits deteriorated. Instead of being in the black you started to come in the red. And I said to my father at the time, this is the time to get out of it. Now like all things in life, you find you get a graph of things that happen, and fishing went down in the 1960s to a very low ebb because of this particular reason. The best people - the best people that were good at their job - were going, by Ministry grant, to buy their own vessels, and therefore the expenses of running a boat didn't diminish but the profits of catching did diminish.

John Leach

There seemed to be a campaign started by full-time fishermen objecting to part-timers, which obviously I was, and a lot of other people like me. To the extent there was letters in the local paper saying that amateur fishermen or part-time fishermen should be either banned or controlled very tightly. One of the letters, I can't remember exactly, but words to the effect that we were catching more fish than them or something or other and I couldn't possibly see the logic of that. Because obviously we can't have the knowledge or the amount of practice that they had. And I did write to the Argus saying that it was every person's right in this country to fish our waters. Which it is. Was and is. And also that fishermen, they spend a lot of money on outlay of gear and boats, but they spend nothing in actually replacing anything in the sea, they don't farm the sea like a farmer that puts manure, fertiliser or whatever, they don't, they just take from it.

I don't think they have any rights at all. And an awful lot of fishermen that were so-called full-time fishermen have started off as part-time fishermen. And the other angle was that I'd worked in construction for quite a few years and had never heard any objection from anybody working in construction about fishermen giving up the sea and working in construction. Never. So I thought they were being a bit dog in the manger and silly about it all.

There was never any actual manifestations of resentment or whatever, in the river or anything like that. I never experienced any actual antagonism. There never was. But then I didn't have much to do with full-time fishermen.

Peter Richards

If I had my life over again, I would never go fishing. Because it's a dying trade. More so this last three or four years. Years ago when we used to go trammelling after plaice and soles we used to fish with twenty-two nets in two fleets. Now the boats fish with a hundred and twenty nets in ten and twelve fleets. They're all overfishing it. And the consequence is there's not the quantity of fish to be caught now, and they're in a bad way now regarding earning a living. Well, my son-in-law, he's one of the biggest earners of fishermen in a small boat capacity and this is the worst year he's ever had. Normally in the herring season he gets a hundred stone to two hundred stone of herrings - now last season the most he got was sixty stone, and other times ten stone, twelve stone. Well, with the expenses it hasn't covered his expenses. For the last four months I doubt whether he's worked out to - his earnings, time he's paid expenses - it hasn't worked out to a hundred pound a week. I say I wouldn't encourage any youngster to take it up now. They won't listen. They enjoy it. And, more or less, it's in their blood and they won't pack it in.

Johnny Humphrey

After the Fishmarket, after they got rid of the Fishmarket, they wanted to get all the fishing boats off, which eventually they did. And there was only a few left on the beach. A lot of them sold, a lot of the boats were sold and went to Jersey, some were sold and went down the West Country. But they gradually got them all off the beach, the fishing boats. And when they built the Marina, then the small boats, the small clubs, such as the Post Office Club, and all the Robert Peel Club, and the Brighton Angling Club, they gradually put their boats in the Marina.

Ted Watherington

I thought the town was conned. Well, it was nice to have a marina there, the more boats there are in an area the better, as it were, there'd be more facilities, whatever. But it was obviously, initially, it was every rich man's. I don't know what the mooring fees were but I know that I enquired, and there's no way could I ever afford to keep a dinghy down there, never mind anything of the size that I had. And I thought the town were conned because gradually they've changed it from a marina to bloody real estate, that's what they've done.

I really don't know what sort of a deal they've [the fishermen] got down there. They did have some nice boats but I did get a bit cheesed off at the time when I used to go down there, you used to have to pay a pound and I thought, well you know it's rather like rubbing your nose in it when they charge you a quid to go and look at boats there's no way you could afford to have, I thought that was a bit saucy.

I supported the Marina. I was involved long before the Marina was built. We attended quite a lot of meetings in Brighton and in London and we had models of what was being

proposed for the fishermen, which included a quayside of its own, a fishmarket, fish stores, fishermen's club. It was all there. We were offered the far south-western corner of the outer harbour and we all went down. I took the fishermen down and everybody was going there all jolly at the thought of what they were going to get and when they got across there none of them could accept it. There was not one fisherman who wanted to accept what was being offered. They could see the trouble with most of the boats at that time were open boats, and the seas that could come across or sweep down would fill the boats up, so nobody would accept it. So, in the end they finished up where they are now outside the little gates. I find it very sad because there are one or two decent fishermen, good fishermen of the old stock, if you understand. But no, I don't call that much of a fishing fleet there now, so my vision of the fishing fleet, as I have said already, should be on a par to that of the Hastings fleet. And that's the way it should have been.

Jimmy Howell

When the Marina was built we come in here because we was on the beach, as you can imagine, there was no boats on the beach fishing for a living any more. We all was in Shoreham, Newhaven and various harbours. When the Marina was opened it must have been like heaven for us to have a boat that was afloat all the tide and the convenience of being here. If you can imagine getting up two or three o'clock in the morning to get your boat off and not getting back some nights till eleven, twelve o'clock because it was only tidal, then getting a place like the Marina which is open any time of night, you can go when you like and get back when you like. You imagine you used to do sixteen hours some days for eight hours' work waiting for the tide to come in or out. When the Marina was opened everybody come here. All the full-time boats come to the Marina because of having the convenience of having their boat afloat and of course having a sheltered harbour where you can get in and out any time of the tide or anything. Some of the tidal harbours like Rye or Littlehampton are still tidal where you get four hours a day where you can't even get in or out, so you imagine two hours before low water and two hours after, even if it was blowing a gale you had to sit out there and wait for the tide to come in.

Dave May

I'm very pleased, I like the Marina, it's easy, no tide to worry about. It's a good place to fish and you're pretty central, for the fishing grounds. All your facilities are laid on plus there is no tide in there, it's not like a river where you've got a tide running down there and you go home at night worrying about your boat, is the boat alright in the tide. Both harbours, Shoreham and Newhaven, they dry out, so your boat actually takes the ground. And it leaves you worrying, is the boat laying alright, of a night. At the Marina you've got none of that. Plus there's security at the Marina, they keep an eye on your boats, so it's a lot better.

John Gillam

About the Contributors

Bobby Andrew: born around 1923 into an old fishing family. One of the last of the beach seiners, following the tradition of his mother's family. He also worked as a milkman and, with other members of his family, as a scene-shifter at Brighton's Theatre Royal. During the War he served in the Navy on minesweepers.

George (Cow Heel) Andrew: born in 1900 into one of Brighton's oldest and largest fishing families. A Dunkirk veteran in 1940, he joined the Navy but was invalided out. After the war he and his brother Toby fished in the Tempest and the Dorothy Elena, named after their twin sisters. He was licensed as a pleasure boat skipper and had the New Skylark built. He died in 1995.

Mary (Queenie) Foster: worked at the family stall on the Level until she married and had a family. Later she ran a shop on the corner of Bentham Road and Whichelo Place, where they sold green-groceries and flowers as well as fish. She retired for a time but around 1970 started helping her nephew Roger on his stall, finally retiring properly at Christmas 1994 when she was seventy-five.

Ted (Big Ted) Gillam: husband of Barbara, was born in 1915. His family have been fishing for more generations than he can fathom and he has carried on the family tradition. It's been a hard but happy life and he is glad to see his sons carrying it on, although they view things in a different light. He would love to see it all over again.

Barbara Gillam: mother of Linda, John and Andrew. Born in 1924 on a farm at Washington, Sussex, and has gone from farming to fishing. She has six children: four boys and two girls, thirteen grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, another on the way. A great life achievement, which she says is highly recommended.

Linda Gillam: born in 1953. A registered childminder, she has worked in Holland, Paris and Geneva as a childminder/nanny. She has a son of fourteen.

John Gillam: born in 1956, started working out of Shoreham with Peter Leach on the Mary Jane, went with his older brother Ted for a while and then in 1977 bought his own boat, the Renard. After eighteen months or so as coxswain of Shoreham lifeboat he skippered Peter Leach's Jubilee. Later he had the Junelipet and the Roma IV, before acquiring the Jenna Marie in 1995. He had her number changed to SM 163 in memory of his father's boat, the Alert.

Andrew Gillam: born in 1965 and left school unofficially to go fishing with his brother, Ted, in the Tobyroc. Ted taught him everything he knows. Later he worked with Jim Partridge on the Royal Escape, lobster-potting out of Shoreham. In 1989, after another spell with Ted, he bought a hull and fitted it out: the Avanti. He took over the Roma IV from brother John in 1995.

Roger Harding: born in 1942. He helped out on his father's fish stall but when he left school he became an apprentice upholsterer for a time, before returning to work on the family stall. At around twenty-six, on his father's retirement, he took over the stall and began to build up the business which he is still running today (1995). Roger is married with two daughters.

Alan Hayes: born in 1944 in Ship Street, Brighton and bought his first boat, a twelve-foot dinghy, at the age of fifteen when he left school. After a spell as an apprentice plumber he started fishing full-time, working his way up to bigger boats until the thirty-three foot Surprise which he bought in 1976. In the same year he married Carol (daughter of Johnny Humphrey) and they have two children. From 1980 to 1987 he worked on a pilot cutter for Trinity House, but continued fishing. At present (1995) he fishes out of Brighton Marina in the twenty-three foot Mizpah.

Bob Holden: born in 1906, worked at the Newhaven boat builders, Cantells, from 1921 to 1939. Cantells had two shops which in 1994 were still in use as a fishmarket and fishermen's club, near the lifeboat station on the West Quay.

Jimmy Howell: born in 1924 in Essex Street, comes from a very old Sussex fishing family. All his spare time was spent helping his father on the beach. He married a local girl, Mary Kathleen and they had two sons and one daughter, who sadly have not been able to carry on the tradition. He spent twenty-two years as the Sussex Sea Fisheries Protection Officer and championed the rights of local fisherman.

Johnny Humphrey: born in 1915 in Carlton Street, Brighton, now demolished. He comes from a long line of fishermen. He left school at the age of fourteen to go fishing with his father. In 1934 he joined the Royal Navy as a stoker and obtained the rank of Chief Petty Officer. In 1938 he married Jane (known as Jean) Ship. They have three daughters. After the war he had various jobs but still kept involved with fishing and pleasure-boating. After two major operations he still (January 1995) involves himself with the fishing fraternity.

John Leach: Son of Harry Leach who owned several trawlers, and grandson of Bobby Leach. Spent his early life helping his father with his fleet of boats and as an auctioneer in Brighton's fishmarket. During the Second World War he joined the Merchant Navy fishing fleet. He took his boat, the Marie J Leach, over to Dunkirk. He was Chairman of the Sussex Sea Fisheries Committee up to the early 1980s, Mayor of Brighton in 1980, and an M.B.E. He died in 1995.

Horace (Rachel) Leach: born in 1905, the son of Frank Leach and one of a family of thirteen. He went to sea as a lad in one of the last of the old deep-water luggers, the Lord Roberts, skippered by Bill 'Mad Muller' Taylor. A Dunkirk veteran, he was in fishing and boating all his life, working his father's boats. His late wife, Elsie, was the daughter of Ben Allen (grandfather of Ted Gillam), and they have four children. He died in 1996.

Dave (Tubby) May: born around 1938, he started to go out fishing at fifteen, mainly with George Gillam. In the late '50s he bought a trawler called the Edward and Mary which is now a museum piece on the beach at Hastings. From about 1961-66 he skippered a tripping boat, the Alexander and later took out angling parties from Shoreham in the Gannet. He claims to be married to the sea. The May family used to own bathing machines, some of which were on the beach until the start of the Second World War.

Joe Mitchell: born in 1925 in Marine Gardens, Brighton, was one of six brothers and the son and grandson of fishermen. As a lad he worked in the family fish wholesale business until the outbreak of World War Two when he joined the Navy at sixteen. After the War he worked on the family fish stall in the Open Market until his retirement in 1987.

Margaret Newman: lived as a child at 9 Chuters Gardens, off West Street. She came from a family of nine children, of whom two died. Her mother was very poor because her father used to go fishing. When she was still very young, the family moved to 14 Frederick Street. She went to school at St. Mary Magdalene's.

Kevin O'Connor: brought up in Battersea. From 1963-65 he was a jockey. He worked at a fish shop in London from 1966-68. He married in 1968 and has two children. He worked at fish shops in Brighton and Hove, acquiring his own shop in 1969. In 1990 he was world winkle-picking champion and was mentioned in the Guinness Book of Records.

Stephen Richard Ovet: born into an old Brighton fishing family in 1921. He spent most of his young years working with his father and grandfather. He went fishing at sixteen, but after a year or so he was taken away and put into a shore job by his mother. He was a licensed boatman from 1939 and served in cruisers and destroyers in the Second World War. He married later so that was the end of his sea time.

Dorothy Pierce: married Edward Pierce on 4 November 1939, and was widowed after fifty-three years. She and her husband brought up four children, two girls and two boys.

Edward Pierce: born in 1915 in Sun Street, Brighton, the fourth son of a family of eleven. His father and his uncles were fishermen. When he was about twelve he started working down at the beach and eventually went to sea in the Marie J Leach. He was called up for service with the Fleet Air Arm, but released so he could work as engineer on a new trawler. He died in 1992.

Peter Richards: born in Middlesex in 1938, left school and home when he was fifteen. After working on various farms in the Home Counties, came to Brighton at eighteen. He fell in love with boats but it was some years before he was able to buy an abandoned boat. He was a part-time fisherman from about 1970 to 1985, when a drop in wages forced him to sell his last regular fishing boat, the Christie Sue.

Jim Sinden: born in 1917. His father was Wally Sinden, who was skipper of the lugger, the Shades of Evening, and of the Brighton National Lifeboat, the William Wallace. Jim used to help the family on the beach as a lad and joined the Navy in the War. He started working at the Theatre Royal in 1951, as a scene-shifter.

Dick Taylor: born in Brighton in 1909, one of a family of nine. He was 'born and bred on the beach'. His family lived in Russell Street, now demolished. He left school at fourteen and learned about fishing from his father, a lifeboat coxswain. Later he worked in fish shops in George Street, and the Leach's shop in St. James' Street.

Irene (Rene) Millicent Taylor (nee Leach): born in Steine Street, Brighton, in 1910. One of nine children, she is the daughter of Bobby Leach. She married John Taylor in 1933. From 1935 to 1969 she and her husband owned and ran the Star and Garter Hotel. They have two children.

Len Trussell: born in North Street, Brighton, in 1920, one of a family of nine. When his mother died he was given a home by Rene Taylor, and worked in the Leach's hotel. As a boy he spent much of his time on the beach helping out. From the age of sixteen he would make himself available as crewman either on a fishing boat or, in the summer, on one of the Skylarks. He went to Saint Valery in 1940.

James Ward: born in 1914, is a widower with one daughter. He has lived in Brighton all his life and comes from an old fishing family. His father was a fisherman and his grandfather was skipper of the Skylark. Not a fisherman himself, he worked as a carpenter and built aeroplanes during the war.

Doris Watherington (nee Mitchell): born in 1925. Her great-grandfather, grandfather and father were all fishermen. She grew up in William Street until around 1937 when it was condemned. At fourteen, when war had broken out, she was sent to work in the old Brighton & Hove Laundry in Conway Street, Hove. After the War, Doris married Ted Watherington and had two children.

Ted Watherington: born of a Scottish mother and Cockney father in 1921 and brought up in South Africa. He joined the services when he was fourteen and after serving during the war came to Brighton where he married Doris. His fishing life started when he worked with his father-in-law, Bill Mitchell. When the family boats were sold he took a series of shore jobs until he retired in 1984.

Glossary

Words given in the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (1995 edition) are only included where they; have a particular local interest or need fuller explanation. Some of the words are used in speech only, so their spelling is uncertain and there may be some disagreement about their precise meaning.

bass broom: hard broom used to scrub clothes, etc.

bathing machine: wooden hut on four wheels with steps which was drawn down to the edge of the sea; bathers would leave their clothes inside and go naked down the steps into the water, their modesty protected (sometimes) by a sort of hood or awning; bathing machines fell into disuse around 1900 but some could still be seen on the beach until they were cleared in 1940

beam: beam of wood holding open the front end of a trawl net and towed along the seabed

beamer: beam trawler

bend (a net) in: fasten two net-lines together to make a continuous line; a set of nets fastened together would be a 'bend-in'

belly: the under-part of a trawl net

beetle lobster: A berried beetle is a female lobster carrying her eggs, illegal to land

Bexhill Donkeys or Bexhill Runners: rabbits

boating: same as 'pleasure-boating'

boy ashore: man on beach responsible for attaching rope and hauling boat up

braid: make a trawl or other net to breeze: to blow hard, of wind

bunce or bunts: a perk; fish kicked under the table during weighing out to be collected later as an informal bonus

butress: the bottom of a tree used for shaping the end of a trawl beam

caddycue or cattycue: another name for cutch

capstan: revolving upright wooden cylinder onto which a rope is wound to pull a boat up the beach

chawk: let a boat slide down the beach

Chopbacks: name given to Hastings fishermen

chuckles: large plaice

cod end: the narrow end of a trawl net in which fish are trapped

cork-line: floating rope on top of drift-net

counter-stern: protruding convex stern designed so that waves will lift the boat as it's being beached; usually on smaller beach boats

cutch: commercial name of catechu, obtained from the Acacia catechu tree of Asia; contains approximately 50% tannin and is used for preserving ropes, nets, sails, etc. made from natural materials

dan: net marker buoy about eight feet high, with weight at bottom, buoyancy in the middle and flag at top

drifting, drift-netting, netting: using nets hanging vertically from the water's surface that drift with the tide. Used for catching round fish such as herring, mackerel or sprats

Eastdeaners: community of fishermen who lived and kept their boats in the vicinity of Bedford Street

fish alley: double row of butchers and fish stalls facing each other in the roofed central section of the Open Market

fish from away: non-local fish sold in the market

fishing station: part of beach where fishing boats were kept

flagweed: large sea-weed which can clog nets

fleet of nets: a set of nets, joined together

foul net: one which is no longer in the right position, so that the fish can escape

frap: heavy chain sunk deep into the beach to anchor a capstan

gipper or gibber: slime and liquid that oozes from recently-caught fish

ground, grounds, fishing grounds: area of sea-bed where fish are to be found

gunners: gurnards hand plaice: small plaice

hank: it was all good hank we had a good time

happy jacking or apple jacking: children singing on the fishmarket or under the pier for pennies which people would throw down to them

hard: hard ground where boats can be launched or kept, as in 'Fishmarket Hard'

haul: pull in (a net)

hauler: hydraulic device for hauling nets

heave up: pull a boat up the beach

heavers-up: men who pulled boats up the beach, usually paid in uffal

herring dees: sheds, usually in backyards, for smoking herring

hog-boat, hoggie: broad-beamed beach fishing boat with flat stern, peculiar to Brighton, may have originated in Holland, eventually replaced by the lugger

huffier or uffaller: man who rowed out to ferry the fish ashore from the luggers anchored in the roads, or carried boxes of fish up the beach

hundred: in counting herring for sale: a 'hundred' was thirty werps (120 herring); or, if you were buying a 'last', thirty-three werps (132 herring)

inside: within three miles of the shore

jigger: another word for mizzen; or light lifting tackle used on a boat

Kelvin: make of marine engine

kibblings, kibbles or squibbles: small skate and dabs in mixed lots

kit: barrel of herrings; a small kit was two and a half hundred herring

knockarse: any flat-sterned boat such as a hog-boat

knock up: come onto beach broadside on

knocked about, bumped about: used of a boat pitching in the waves

landly wind: one blowing from the land

last: in counting herring for sale, a 'last' was nominally 10,000, but the actual number was 13,200

lee-board: board attached to the side of a sailing boat to stop her drifting sideways

liptic [elliptic] stern: rounded shape of stern in the form of an ellipse, seen on some beach boats

lugger: two-masted vessel with lugsails having a stern outrigger to pull out the sheet of the mizzen sail

mace: 'have it on the mace': buying something on credit

mizzen: small sail in the stern which keeps the boat steady

monofilament nets: also called mono or monofold nets; very fine modern nets

to nitch: fasten nets together at intervals of a foot or so when 'bending in'

norselling (pronounced nussling): attaching nets to net-lines with norsels, generally four norsels between two corks

oil gear: wet weather clothing, formerly calico smocks etc. waterproofed with linseed oil

oily off or hauly off, take the olly-off road: launch the boat from the beach by pulling her out on an anchor line laid out at low tide; she might be 'tripped off' suddenly like a lifeboat so she shot down the beach into the water

otter boards: boards to hold the trawl net open

outside: more than three miles from the shore

pipe-stems: fish with no roe

pleasure-boating, pleasure-tripping, tripping, pleasuring: taking people out for paid boat rides from the beach

preak: small octopus

prickel: basket/measure for mackerel (about 200)

pudden nets: nets which have spun into a tight roll while being hauled

punt: smaller beach boat, also known as 'herring cocker'

the roads: anchorage off Brighton beach between the piers) used by larger boats such as luggers

rocks offshore: a line of rocks running west to east between Littlehampton and Black Rock

sea pouts: salt water boils

seine-fishing, seining: method of catching mackerel using special drift nets 'shot' around a shoal from the beach, with or without a boat

seiners: people or boats involved in seine fishing

set net: one that is anchored and left

shoot: to cast (a net); pronounced to rhyme with foot

(they're) showing up: said by seine fishermen when the shoals of mackerel can be seen off the beach

shraves: troughs in an undulating line of cliffs, such as the cliffs of the Seven Sisters; more particularly used of the cliffs between Newhaven and Portobello, used as navigation marks

silver darlings: herring

slips: small soles

slabweed: plankton

soo out: moor a boat so she'll be high and dry at low tide

spatters: small plaice

spider crabs: inedible crabs, which can tear nets

spinning the cuff: having a yarn, exchanging stories

spring an oar: fracture an oar by putting too much strain on it

squat: small trestle to support a boat on the beach

stade: fishing station

static gear: anchored trammel nets

summer slab: greenish-brown algae that floats on the water in warm weather; same as slabweed

to tail (a boat): to catch on the bottom

to tan (nets, sails etc.): to dip them in cutch to clean and preserve them

tanned frock: fishing garment tanned with the nets and sails

thornback: skate

tie tails: smoked herrings that had dropped off the line, sold cheap or given away

tingle: patch of lead, copper or wood used to patch a hole in a boat

toiler boy: his job was to put 'toiler' (tallow) on the trows to keep them greased

tow: to trawl

trammelling, trammel-netting: fishing with trammel nets

trammel net: a curtain of net, anchored to the sea bed, with three layers: a small-mesh inner net and two large-mesh outer nets, sometimes called walls or walling

trawling: towing a large net in the form of a cone-shaped bag attached to a beam or to otter boards dragged over the sea-bed; used especially for flat fish such as sole or plaice

trows: timbers placed beneath boats which are being hauled up or down the beach, sometimes slotted to take the keels

uffal: (small) fish not suitable for market, used for payment in kind

uffaller: see huffer

unbutton: pick out mackerel from the drift-net, one by one

Westdeaners: community of fishermen who lived and kept their boats in the vicinity of West Street, where there used to be a dene, or small opening in the cliff

Western Hards: predominantly rocky and flinty ground west of Shoreham

werp: the basic unit (four fish) used in counting herring for sale; see 'hundred' and 'last'

whale: apron worn by fishermen, could be hoisted on mast as signal of distress
work a boat out: a skipper works a boat out by paying the lion's share of the catch to the owner over a period of time until he becomes the owner

work nets: same as haul nets

yachts: sometimes used as another name for the pleasure-boats