

## **Interview with Mr Alan Donaldson - 16 June 2007**

**The Interview with Mr Alan Donaldson was conducted in Gourdon/Gurden Scots, being the mother tongue of both interviewee and interviewer.<sup>1</sup> Brief interjections are given in italics. Explanatory footnotes are provided where necessary. There is a slightly blurred section immediately prior to starting the tape proper. Other indistinct sections are marked with ellipsis - ....**

**The Interview focuses on Alan's early life and connections with fishing and his later experiences of different types of fishing as a Gurden fisherman and skipper, providing fascinating insight into the changes to inshore fishing from the 1960s to the present and sadly testifying to the decline of the industry**

### **Tape 1, Side 1**

**This is an Interview with Mr Alan Donaldson on Saturday 16 June, 2007 on fishing of different types, his experiences, memories and views.**

**Celia : Right, Alan, we're ready to start and we've decided that wir gaen ti speak in Gurden Scots.**

**Alan : Aye we'll jist try then aye.**

Celia : Okay then. Right I'm jist gaen ti ask ye yir name first.

Alan : Mi name is Alan Donaldson

Celia : And ye were born ...?

Alan ; 23 November 1955.

Celia : Which maks you ..?

Alan : 51 – 52 this November.

Celia : Okay, this is a good age for the project, for Elphinstone and for the Coastal Heritage because it 'll allow them to compare wi really aulder fishermen. Okay, the first question is when you were a laddie grauwin up in Gurden did you tak an interest in things like boats, fish, the herber, the sea. Fin ye think back how did you kinda tik an interest in these things?

Alan : Well, I jist – well I suppose, grouwin up in the 60s, it wis great ...Gurden wis a great place.. I dah ken - jist daft about the sea – it wis a that in wis in yer mind - it wis aa that wis in mi heid. Wi wis nevir awa fae the herber fin wi wis bairns. That wis it - the hale day.

Celia : Fit wir ye dohin at the herber?

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<sup>1</sup> Gourdon, pronounced Gurden by the locals is small village some 12 miles south of Stonehaven, once a thriving line and seine net fishing port.

Alan : Jist aathing. Wi tried ti help. We tied a boat's rope, ye thought ye wis the



**Dooking in the harbour 1966. Left to right Alan and his brothers Alex, Keith and Roy.**

king. If ye helped a boat land its shot o fish fin ye wis getting a bittie aulder, ye thoct this wis great. Ye yohsed ti run doon the brae and up the brae and if ye saw anithir boat comin, ye ran doon again.<sup>2</sup> It wis great. Was great.

Celia ; Yes. Fin ye say helping ti tie up a boat, did ye ken how ti tie it up properly? Were ye shown how to doh a correct knot or ...

Alan : Aye. Well, tyin up a boat wis something that ye learnt through .... as lang back as ye kid mind... the middle o the primary school kind o thing, ye kid manage ti tie a roond turn and twa half hitches and that tied a boat up. Somebody showed ye it and that wis it *That wis it*. Ye wis interested in it. *Ye picked it up really fest* Aye, ... grouwin up at that time – the boats wis - well, aabody worked in Gurden at that time.

*The next section is indistinct when both interviewer and interviewee talk simultaneously.*

Celia : That's right. It wis the main thing and it wis something similar for misel though obviously I'm a lassie but we yohsed to spend a lot o the summer holidays doon at the herber, waiting for the boats ti come in.

*Again both speak over one another.*

Alan : I wis in twice a day – dookin Aabody did ..... I dah ken – nooadays the bairns – we wis a lot happier. I really div believe that. Aabody wis the same. Robert Ceretti<sup>3</sup> says ti me we wis that plaised because naebody hid – aabody hid the same. Nothing.

Celia : That's certainly one wye o pittin it. Wis there only tradition in your family o folk gaen ti the sea? Yer father? Yer grand father?

Alan : Mi father went. Fin I wis born mi father wis at the sea and mi grandfather – he went ti sea fin I wis at primary school. I think that's fin he cam ti Gurden but further than that honest I really dinna kain . I dah think he wis fairmin folk. He worked on the fairm afore he went ti the sea but at that time, I think there wis a puckle o them did that.- come fae fairms ti the sea but mi granny, aye his wife, she come fae the Crawton. <sup>4</sup> She wis born at the Crawton, so whether her folk gaed ti the sea or no – that's Davidsons fae the Crawton.

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<sup>2</sup> The original Gurden settlement was down at the harbour, doon the brae. Much later new houses were built at the top of the brae, up the brae. To those living doon the brae, *through the toon* meant along to the harbour

<sup>3</sup> A slightly younger "contemporary of Alan's.

<sup>4</sup> Crawton, some three miles south of Stonehaven, was once a fishing a village, now known for its famous bird sanctuary, Fowlsheugh.

Celia : Was she involved at aa wi sheelin and baitin or yer mithir...?

Alan : Oh aye – she baited for mi grandfather, she baited for mi deddie fin I wis young, at primary school. <sup>5</sup>

Celia : So ye'd seen that?

Alan ; Aye. He went ti the salmon fishin a lot, mi grandfather. A lot fowk, a lot o them yohsed ti doh that at that time – ging ti the salmon fishing in the summer and the lines in the winter.

Celia : And fit about yer mither, did she get nvolved in that side?

Alan : Well, she baited ti mi father fin we wis young and mi father stopped fin I started. Still .. I wis the auldest – there wis five o wi an sometimes, well, a struggle for aabody sometimes but she - Mi father stopped fin I started because mi mither didna want ti doh aa this – ging ti the sea – started workin ...and ye got a steady pey and mi mither said it wis the best thing ye iver did. Mi father still his a hankerin for the seine net – he aye his din. He said it wis the best job he wis iver at.

Celia : Yes. So do you see see it mebbe as partly tradition then? As well as a village thing?

Alan : Mmmhm. ....tracin it back, I suppose, great, great granda and aathing but I canna dah that onywe.

Celia : But that's still quite far back. Let's see how that's goin.

Celia : Okay. Let's carry on wi that then. Now, ye were sayin about how ye hid a glorious childhood. Aathing wis really excellent at that time and the herber wis a focal point for ye. Fit about fin ye were a wee bittie aulder. Did ye – em – hae trips oot ti the sea wi different fishermen? or did ye hae boatie or fit did ye doh?

Alan : Went – first time I went wi mi father, he wis eh gaen crew wi Govie <sup>6</sup> - in the *Reaper* – the auld een, the widen een.an it wis the tattie holidays <sup>7</sup>– I wisna auld enough - I didna get ti ging ti the tatties – I dah ken foo auld I'd a been. I nevir got ti ging ti the tatties onywe . I didna hae a big brother ti ging ti the tatties wi or nothing, so I got ti ging ti the lines wi them. And it wis Govie, mi father, Willie Dorrit and Onzie Mill – that wis the fower o them. <sup>8</sup> The tattie holidays and they were gaen ti the Shald Water ti the lines – that wis the first time I can mind o gaen oot – aye for a fishin trip and I spewed. Aye, I spewed but I mind mi father said it wisna a very

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<sup>5</sup> “Deddie” is a unique Gurden term for “grandfather”, echoed in the terms “didy” and “dide”, still current further north, around Inverallochy/Cairnbulg and St Combs. See short article on the term by the interviewer in the May issue of *Leopard* magazine.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Gove Cargill, skipper of the *Reaper* – interview archived with Elphinstone Institute, extracts on *Elphinstone Kist*.

<sup>7</sup> At this time school children got three weeks holidays to go to the tattie picking. It was a much prized activity for its fun as well as for the income generated.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Gove Cargill, Sandy Donaldson, Alan's father, Willie Dorward and Andrew Mill

bonnie day.<sup>9</sup> I canna actually mind muckle aboot it but I mind o spewin and I mind Onzie wis kiddin me on and him and Willie Dorrit said, “Well, far iver spews his ti clean it up”. I thoct, “Oh dearie me” but I didna like. Ken, they cleaned it up. They wir tormentin me.. So I wis oot wi thaim

Celia : How auld hid ye been?

Alan ; I’d mebbe been aboot six or sevin, I would think. Aboot sevin – mebbe aicht – actually I couldna tell ye. That wis the first day I mind o gaen. and then, mi father - the next time I mind – I yohsed ti ask mi grandfather – he went wi Henry Lownie in the *Silver Quest* - in the summer holidays – I yohsed ti pluck up courage ti ask him but he wid nevir tak mi cause I think he wis aye fairt in case – ken - something happened. So the next time I went – I mind o gaen – wis mi father. Gin this time Govie had been at the lines and mi mither wis pregnant wi mi sister, that’s the youngest o wir family and she hid ti stop baitin ti ging and hae her. So mi father got a berth wi Peter and Stephen Morrison in the little *Quest*. So I wis oot wi thaim and this this time they were at the seine net, in the summer time and me and mi brither – I’d been 11 or 12 gin this time – and me and mi brither went twa three times wi thaim, twa summers ti the seine net and that wis the next time I mindit o gaen. *So ye ...* No, no! I’ve mixed up the time. I went wi the *Reaper* ti the seine net and aa afore mi father –*Oh right – aye* - that wis atween that – that wis the seine net and aa. It wis a different wye a fishin. That wis the first time I’d been at that.

Celia ; Now did you notice that when ye were little, Alan? That em, ye ken – ye saw the lines being fished. Ye obviously saw them gaen wheechin aff the funnel inti the water. Ye also saw the seine net being worked – aye. So ye were aware, ye were registering this is different types o fishin.

Alan : Oh aye, but in thae days, ye see, that’s anither thing, they lads, eh, at that time, aathing wis seasonal. It’s nae like noo. It’s creels in twelve months a year. Aathing wis seasonal. Ye put yer creels in roond aboot Easter time and gin the middle o September, mebbe the end o September aa the creels wis oot. Aabody wis at the lines. Partans and aathing wis aa rested aa winter and then the bigger boats that didna ging ti the lines, they gaed ti the seine net. They jist gaed ti that through the summer.

Celia ; Wis that – ye say it wis seasonal. Is that because jist the seasons dictated that - obviously the partans were awa but wis it also partly a plan? You said to rest the partans and that or it jist occurred naturally? Ye were following the seasons.

Alan ; Jist naturally and anither thing – anither wye ti look at it toh wis like, eh, like eh – Robert Ceretti, aye his grandfather, Robbie Daisy and them and Ake Barr,<sup>10</sup> they, Robbie aye yohsed ti say to Googie<sup>11</sup> there wisna mebbe that mony gaen ti the partans in the summer but it wid gie yer Granny a rest – fae sheelin and baitin.<sup>12</sup> It wisna jist fir that but it did gie the wifies a rest because the wifies hid the short end o

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<sup>9</sup> This understatement usually means it was pretty rough and unpleasant!

<sup>10</sup> Robert Gowans and Alex Gowans, both Gourdon Skippers at the time.

<sup>11</sup> Nickname of Robert Ceretti

<sup>12</sup> Sheelin and baitin for the line fishing was hard graft for the women folk and lasted throughout the long, weary months of winter.

the stick at the lines. There's nae twa doots aboot that. And I think Govie wid say that and he wis a great line man.<sup>13</sup>

Celia : Aye, that's true and mi mither hid ti bait as well and yes, it wis – it wis hard lines!

Alan : And bairns and running aboot thir feet an aathing. *Yes, that's right.* Govie'll say that and Govie wis a great line fisher.

Celia : Yes, Govie prefers line fishing because he says it disna damage the fish.

Alan : Disna damage nothing. We'd aa be still at the lines and the sea wid be fuhl yet.

Celia : Yeah. But fin ye were young and ye were noticing these styles o fishing, did ye think, Oh yeah, that wis good or this een's better than that een?

Alan : Na – I jist – I likt it aa. I likt it aa. The lines wis gid : the seine net wis ower the tap. I likt them aa. I kidna really hae, prefer a favourite. I dinna think ye kid, eh, get a favourite actually till ye wis actually workin it fir a livin kinda thing. If ye asked me noo fit wis mi favourite, I reckon I wid tell ye bit fin, at that time I jist wantit ti ging ti the sea and that wis it. I mean if I'd a been born in the fish...., ye wid a went, ken jist fir the sake o gettin oot. Well, I wida went like but ...

Celia : And you decided ye were gaen ti ging ti the sea whenever ye got ready ti leave the school or hid ye only ither experience apart fae gaen wi the bigger boats?

Alan : I likt the Gurden Primary school. I likt it – I really likit it aa the time and we kinda – I think we kinda, we wis at a kinda crossroads, I think because we hid Mr Christie – fit wis the auld school - *So did I* – disciplinarian, regimented. It wis like line up every Monday – ye hid ti hae a comb and a paper – she loookt in yer lugs and aathing bit then aa of a sudden, fin he retired we got Mr Crighton fa wis a young teacher at that time, completely different ideas, modern wye o thinking. I got two or else three years o Bill Crighton and he wis completely different but he wis nae worse a teacher. He wis a good teacher but he musta been young at that time. *Yes, I suppose he was.* His wife played the piana and gied us music and aathing. He hid totally different ideas. Wi got ti wander aboot and aathing at the school. It wis like the army wi Mr Christie. but dah say - I'm nae sayin he wisna a good teacher. *I liked Christie.* Bit fin I passed my 11+ and ye went ti the Mackie<sup>14</sup> - we wis aboot the last – I think it wis aboot a year eftir that, and that wis done awa wi, mind. And we went ti the Macke and so ye wis supposed ti be clevir. Well, eftir the first day I went in there, I went, "Oh dear". I jist didna like it. It wis jist – I dah ken – I think it wis ower big – I think that wis fit it wis, comin fae here. I hid nevir been naewye. It wis a richt shock ti me. They were gaen aboot wi thon gowns on. It wis like Whacko – it wis like Whacko except they didna hae thon mortar boards. I wis faird. I wis and I jist didna like it eftir the first day I wis there and I passed my 11+ and aathing. Eftir that it wis jist doonhill. I took nae interest in it at aa – Latin and French and aathing.

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<sup>13</sup> See Andrew Gove Cargill Interview for Elphinstone Institute.

<sup>14</sup> Mackie Academy was the Senior Secondary School in nearby Stonehaven which everyone aspired to attend though those who did not pass the Qualifying Exam, the Scottish equivalent of the 11+ went on to the local Junior Secondary in Inverbervie, a mile north of Gourdon.

I jist – I wish I hid stuck in noo. Nae jist fir – I mebbe still wid hae endit up at the sea bit bein able ti ging yer holidays and speak ti somebody – it wid be great.

Celia : Yes, it wid be useful although the emphasis wisna on teaching it as a spoken language at that time. It wis very much writing, translation.

Alan : Bit I wis still set on gaen ti the sea so – eh – I got twa- three pound left ti mi and mi father said we’ll buy a little boat and you and yer brither can ging pairt time ti the creels. Noo I dah ken if this wis ti try and pit me aff or fit. I dah ken. Mi mither actually – I heard rumours aboot that, she wis tryin ti pit mi aff gaen ti the sea bit it jist made mi worse. It jist made mi worse.

Celia : How mony creels did ye work?

Alan : Well, only about twenty creels.

Celia ; Fit wis it ca’d?

Alan ; The boat – well, actually, the name o the boat – we bocht it at a place at Carnoustie – and it hid an ootboard engine. It wis actually built in Orkney. We didna ken that till eftir we bocht it. Mi mither cum fae Orkney and we didna ken. So wi didna ken fit ti caa it. So mi father says well we’ll pit names intil a – nae intil a hat – inti something. There wis *Lisa May*, Arkal – it wisna spelt like the horse – it wis fir Alan, Roy, Keith, Alec, Lisa.<sup>15</sup> There wis the five o wi and it wis mi mither that thocht o that. *Oh yes – that’s good.* And there wis anither twa names – honest I cah mind fit they were. And she wis jist a bairn at the time and she put it in and she hauled oot *Lisa May*, so wi jist ca’d it *Lisa May*. *ME 42. (ME 42 – a Montrose registration)* That’s foo it wis ca’d that. She hauled that oot – she did. So wi hid about twenty creels – me and mi brither and wi yohsed ti ging and haul them afore wi went ti the school.

Celia : Fit – every day?

Alan : Aye ivery mornin – in the summer time – jist the summer – and that jist made mi worse. I yohsed ti mysteriously be ten meenits late and aathing – tyin up the boat and here’s the bus<sup>16</sup> – *missed the bus* – aye, I wis as bad as that like. He wis still at the Primary fin wi first got it, mi brither – he’d been last year at the Primary bit he nevir took nae notion. I couldna get him oot o his bed or nothing. *Wis that Roy?* Aye – that’s Roy, aye – he nevir took – bit sayin that he did like gaen ti the sea bit he wisna a lad fir getting up in the morning. Bit it didna bather me. That jist made mi worse, Celia, honest and ...

Celia : And you were obviously in charge fin ye were gaen wi yer brither – Aye – so you were dohin the steerin and aa the rest o’t. And ye jist took ti that like a duck ti water. Naebody said ti ye- this is how ye do it or this is far ti fish? ....fir yer creels.

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<sup>15</sup> Alan’s younger brothers and sister.

<sup>16</sup> Gourdon pupils were uplifted each morning around 8 o’ clock to be transported to Mackie Academy in Stonehaven, some 12 miles north, a procedure that still pertains to this day. other pupils from the other coastal villages and from the hinterland were similarly served.

Alan : No, naebody telt us that aboot the creels. Jist learnt it as ye went along like. Wi didna catch a lot like bit eh it wis jist pocket money bit I mind the first labster wi got wis – we bocht the boat in 1970, that’s fin we bocht the boat, that summer and the first labster wi got wi the creels wis the Cup Final Day – Aiberdeen won the Cup. Noo the wye I ken that wis because there wis a bus gaen fae here – wi wis outside at that time. Well, they opened the pub. the Herber Bar <sup>17</sup> wis open. The bus wis there at sevin or aicht in the morning. And we’d come in wi a labster and we met Bill Mellis - and he wis a year aulder than me so he’d been fifteen past and I’d been fourteen and he wis gawa on the bus ti ging ti the fitba and wi telt him we’d gotten a lobster and he said, “That’s yer first labster” and aabody thocht it wis grait – we’d gotten wir first labster. The bus wis gawa – that’s the wye I mind o that. I jist mind .. mi father ... eh

Celia : Wid you say you were unique then, among laddies o your generation? *No Nuk* In wanting ti ging ti the sea and enjoyin it and likin it?

Alan : Well, I wis the only een that wint.

Celia : Because I mean it’s completely lost now.

Alan : I wis the only een that wint but aabody likt it. Well, ... Alistair Stewart after primary school he wis my best mate and we went ti Mackie thegither – me and him and Elma Mill. That wis the only three oot o the class that went ti the Mackie. <sup>18</sup> And lookit him noo – he does the Fishery thing at the Scottish Office. *That’s right, yes, aye. He wantit ti ging ti the sea?* No, he didna wint ti ging ti the sea but he likt gaen ti the sea. *He likt gaen tit he sea.* Fin I went wi mi father, wi Jimmy Dorrit, he yohsed ti ging wi Jimmy Dorrit <sup>19</sup>, because Jimmy Dorrit bid next door ti him. That’s fa he went oot wi. He likit the sea. Well, he still is – well, see the job he’s in – Fishery Protection he’s ti doh wi that. *Aye – I’ve seen him on TV.* Aye, well, he wis on TV. Arthur Mowatt – well, he nevir went like. Shep.

Celia : Jimmy Broon, the Herber Maister at Stoney and Gurden noo, he – *he’s yunger than me* – he wis exceptionally keen ti ging ti the sea. *He wis the same as me.* His folks – his parents tried ti get him ti doh a joinership – *That’s right, aye* – an apprenticeship in joinery and he tried it for a wee while but he wis determined. *Aye, he wis determined. Aye, well, I wid say Jimmy wis like me, definitely like me. He jist said he wis wintin ti ging.* I wonder how that happens then, di ye think, Alan that certain people jist are focused on that. It’s absolutely right for them?

Alan : I dah ken. I – honestly, Celia, I couldna tell ye but Jimmy wis like that but then he’s left it noo and aa, ye see.

Celia : Yes although he’s got a sort a peripheral connection wi herbers – Harbour Master.

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<sup>17</sup> The Harbour Bar was one of the then two Gourdon hosteleries.

<sup>18</sup> Mackie Academy in Stonehaven – senior secondary school for the area for those who passed the Qualifying Exam, the Scottish version of the 11+

<sup>19</sup> Another well-kent Gourdon skipper of the period.

Alan : Oh aye, ye'll see that wi lads that's been at it. They lave it but they dinna lave it completely. Googie's noo on a fish van. *That's right. There's a connection.* There's aye a connection but Googie – but – Googie's Robert Ceretti – he wid be back ti the sea the morn if he could maak the same money as he's maakin on the fish van.

Celia : We'll come ti that money bit. Now that's you jist aboot ready ti leave the school, so how auld were ye when ye left the school? *Fifteen.* Fifteen, it wis fifteen at that time?

Alan : I wis fifteen in November and I left the school at Christmas, a month eftir.

Celia : Right and yer mother hid agreed by this time that ye kid ging ti the sea?

Alan : Well, I think she'd jist gien up the ghost, I think. An eh – Clark Simpson <sup>20</sup> – *History?* – he wis at the Mackie at the time and ye wisna actually meant ti lave at Christmas but I dah ken how – I wisna - and he kinda said - he cam in and said ti mi – if ye find a job, we'll let ye lave like. Cause gin this time, I'd jist gien up. I mean fit I wis in an A class the first year and the second year wis a B class. Eftir that I jist kept on gaen doon.

Celia : That's terrible, Alan. *I ken.* Cause ye obviously hid the brain ti – continue it.

Alan : Well, mi mither aye said that but ...

Celia : But that's how it worked oot. Ye dinna hae particular regrets aboot that? A bit.

Alan : The school – no – the only regret – I wid say – I wish – I wintit ti ging ti the sea at Gurden but I wish I hid jist thocht bittie mair and gin awa and joined the Navy or the Merchant Navy, even for five or six years. I wid hae seen something far noo I'm sittin here and I've seen nothing. Very little. Bit at that age ye think – oh no, I'm gaen ti the sea at Gurden and that's it. Ye think five or six years, oh dear me, that's miles awa bit fin ye see it noo, even if I'd left for six year and joined the Merchant Navy – ye coulda come back and gin ti the sea. *Ye could, ye could. Aye.* Ye dinna think that at the time.

Celia : No, that's true but Govie tried it the ither wye. He went aff ti the Merchant Service first and then came back but of course - I think he wis only at the sea for a wee whilie before the War broke oot. But tell me aboot yer first berth.

Alan : Well, mi father hid seen well, will we caa him yer father or caa him Alex <sup>21</sup> ? *Aye, mhhh, aye baith.* And Robert Wairden <sup>22</sup> hid been due ti stop in that Merch, afore Merch ti ging ti the fishing, the salmon fishing, *Right.* So yer father wis gaen ti

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<sup>20</sup> History teacher at Mackie Academy, and former fellow-student at university (Aberdeen University) at the same time as the interviewer.

<sup>21</sup> Alan wonders whether to refer to my father, Skipper of the *Trustful ME132* who gave him his first berth as my father or Alex – Alex Craig – pronounced Ehlick in Gurden. It is spelt Alex, pronounced Alec in English, not Alex where the x is nowadays fashionably pronounced!

<sup>22</sup> Robert Warden was a member of my father's crew at the time.



be left wi naebody. Well, he wis kinda a drinkin buddy o mi father's. *Yes, that's right. Aye.* We're aa buddies, bit ken fit I mean and he'd said ti him that ken I wis gaen ti be lavin school. It wis mi father that done it, ye see. And he said ging along ti see Alex Craig, he says. Ye'll get a berth wi Alex Craig. And I thocht – oh ya - I plucked up enough courage ti ging and see him cause thae lads – ye must mind thae lads- maist o the skippers o thae days – thae lads had aa been through the War. Ken that seems like a century auld noo bit maist o the skippers had been through the War, Govie, yer father, Bri- mie, Welsh, Google's grandfather, Bobby Stewartie – they'd aa near been through the War and that's - ken that's sounds like a century, millions ago and they werena auld lads but we thocht they were auld lads bit they werena. This is 1970. They werena auld – mean – that's wis only 25 years eftir the War. Well, it's 25 years i the noo since the Falklands. We looked up ti them onywe ony o the skippers, pit it that wye. They were ..... - whereas no mebbe they're nae but they were at that time. Onywe I hid ti ging along ti see him onywe. <sup>23</sup> And I said – “Mi father said, eh, I wid get ti the sea wi ye, like” And I'll tell ye fit he said yet. *Tell me fit he said.* Ken fit he said. He said, “Ye'll get nae bather. Ye'll be as welcome as the flowers in May” That's fit he said. *Oh, that's aye fit he said. Oh, I ken. That wis a very favourite phrase o mi father's. Oh, that's good.* (At this point both interviewer and interviewee become a little emotional) That's fit he said to mi, like – Welcome as the flowers in May. *I'm glad that ye remember that.* <sup>24</sup> So, fit happened eftir that wis – Robert Wairden hid – there wis a day - he wisna gaen ti manage or something. So, this wis afore Christmas – so he said – asked mi ti taak a day aff the sea jist ti ging – ti lat him ging – *aff the school?* Aye, a day aff the school, sorry. So I went for a day afore Christmas and then left the school at Christmas – so that wis Christmas and first day at the sea wis the 3<sup>rd</sup> o January. Caa mind if it wis a Monday or a Tuesday. Couldna tell ye. Caa mind bit it wis the 3<sup>rd</sup> o January 1971. We went the three o wi till March come and Robert Wairden left ti ging ti the salmon fishing and the there wis jist me and yer father. Went ti the creels that summer. That wis the start o mi then. And we went ti the creels and then went ti the lines the following winter. And then, eh, we wis – wi got on braw actually and wi wis – yer father, mebbe the year eftir – I'm nae richt sure about this – 73 – and fish merchant, Douglas Welsh, he come ti me and said – *Oh yes, aye.* – fit about buyin a boat – fancy buyin a boat? And I thocht – I've only been gaen twa year – I wis a bittie duvious – cause I didna think I'd been gaen lang enough bit I'd learnt – steered up lines and aathing, yer father – ken I learn up the wye ti steer up lines and aathing, and I read the compass and aathing, yer father – and I thocht I wis getting on braw. Well, I wis getting on braw wi yer father and eh – he said there's a boat for sale at Johnner – Leon Dundas – *The Liberty.* <sup>25</sup> It wis £450 he wis needin for it. So I had a £100. So he says – pit a £100 until it. And I thocht well – *It's a good opportunity.* Aye – I'd saved a £100 because – well, the money side o things – we nevir made a fortune but eh, compared ti fit they were getting ashore in thae days, it wis good money like. Ken it wis mi first pay – I aye

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<sup>23</sup> At that time we lived along the main street from the harbour at 7 Mowatt's Lane, a “cottage” built by my Mowatt grandfather, I believe.

<sup>24</sup> My father may be quoting here from a favourite song, *You're as welcome as the flowers in May to dear old Donegal*” Certainly he had a somewhat romantic turn of phrase at times and had a wide repertoire of songs which he both sang and played on the violin or guitar or banjo. He was a versatile musician. His stock of songs included many Scottish and Irish ballads as well as British and American popular songs from many periods.

<sup>25</sup> Alan returns to the proposal put to him by Douglas Welsh, a young fish merchant at the time who later undertook a number of entrepreneurial initiatives connected with fishing.

mind mi first paiy toh wis £18, 18 shillings and that wis a half daihl. <sup>26</sup> An, David Davidson hid started serving his time at Arbuthnott ..... - for a fiver (£5). And that wis a half share that I hid - £18, 18 bob but decimalisation jist come in that year. It wis £18, 18 bob and I kept the 18 bob and jist gaed the rest ti mi mither. <sup>27</sup> I hid a £100 saved up onywe so he says – fit di ye think. So I says, “Well, I wid aisy gie it a try bit I’m a bittie duvious ken aboot lavin Ehlick like – ken I didna want ti doh that.

Celia : My father would have thocht it wis a good opportunity for ye.

Alan : That’s the kind o lad he wis. He did. He didna tak an anger at mi.

Celia : I’m sure he widna.

Alan : Oh, bit he didna. Bit I wis stutterin like – *still a bittie* – and I thocht and then anither thing a lot o folk cried wis – ye needna buy a boat wi somebody that’s nae gaen wi it. Ken, that wis anither famous een. But this gaed on aawye. There’s boats yet, skippers aboard boats yet, they dinna even hae shares in them – thae scallopers but in Gurden it didna seem ti be the done thing. Hid ti be yer brother or yer father, or somebody that wis gaen tit he sea. <sup>28</sup> Says – it’ll never work.

Celia : But then you were quite friendly wi - Welshie.

Alan : Aye, well, I wis feendly wi him. *So ye decided ti taak the opportunity?* So, we went ti Johnner ti see Leon Dundas and the *Liberty* – that wis the name o the boat and they were buying a bigger boat – him and his son, James, so I’m sure it wis £450. I hid a £100 – so that wis it. We bocht the boat and Ally Mackie which wis eh, like Douglas Welsh’s cousin – aye it wid be, aye. He – me and him wis gaen ti ging. So wi went ti the creels. We did nae bad.

Celia : Ye’d hin ti – excuse me for interrupting ye, Alan – but you’d hin ti build up yer creels then. Did ye maak yer ain creels?

Alan : Well, Ally Mackie’s grandfather and them, they made a gid puckle creels ti wi. They were retired mannies apairt fae dohin their ain like– Alex Welsh’s eens – eftir they made – and wi actually applied fich wis anither thing that didna seem ti be din a that offin in Gurden. We applied for a grant ti get money ti buy creels – and ken, we got a grant. Gurden didna seem ti ....

Celia : That wis good. They mebbe didna ken it wis available – or they didna doh it.

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<sup>26</sup> The system was operated as share fishermen, with each crew member getting an equal share/deal of the total catch money, with the Skipper getting two deals one for himself and one for the boat. It may be that the boat’s deal was only a half deal. I cannot remember. It appears too that a youngster like Alan received only a half deal/share, probably because he would have brought only half a full line to fish with.

<sup>27</sup> Alan pronounces the sum, of course, as aichteen or eighteen.

<sup>28</sup> Douglas Welsh would be the main owner though Alan would have £100 of shares/input and would skipper the boat while Welsh remained ashore at his fish merchant work. Alan was hearing some traditional Gurden cautious advice here! Johnner is Johnshaven was a fishing village, some three miles south of Gourdon which even then in 1970s was on the wane as far as fishing was concerned. It still survives as a village with lively social aspects.

Alan : Seemed ti be an affa thing in Gurden. Ken ye hid ti belang aathing or it wis – but eftir the War – Govie wis a great advocate o this. Eftir the War aabody got grants ti build new boats and that bit they didna doh it here.

Celia : But Govie did participate in that scheme, that Grant and Loan Scheme.

Alan : Aye he did cause he bocht the first *Fidelity* aye.

Celia : That' right. Aye – he did. He telt me that in his Interview, so it's interesting that you, ken, were part o well nae similar but a parallel scheme ti buy equipment.

Alan : Then at Arbroath and aa them, eftir the War there wis an affa boats built. They cam back fae the War and they got the Grant and they built new boats bit Gurden jist bocht the eens they were throwin oot, mair or less.

Celia : Well, Govie said he wis the only person in Gurden that took advantage o grant and Loan.<sup>29</sup>

Celia : So ye got a certain amount o creels through that scheme.

Alan : We didna hae a lot o creels. Well, we made them. We didna buy them

Celia : Fin ye were gaen ti the sea wi m father, how mony creels wid ye hiv worked?

Alan : We hid – I mind yet. We hid 125 for two men. That wis aa there wis. And nooadays they're workin, aboot 600. That wis jist aboot aa

Celia : Cause a fleet's 20, isn't it?

Alan : Yer father hid 25. *25 in a fleet – did he?* 25 – instead o haein six fleets o twenty, gie ye 120, he hid five fleets o twenty five. *Oh, is that how he did it?* And he thocht it wis better cause eence ye'd taen a hide o a fleet a creels, wi anither five on the end – it didna maak – it saved ye gaen fir anither fleet, if ye ken fit I mean He'd only five fleets ti pick up whereas if ye'd six o 120, ye'd six – 120 – ye'd six.

Celia : Aye – that's right – five fleets –is that right? I didna realise that cause I aye hid it fixed in my mind that it wis fleets o twenty.

Alan : He wis the only een that hid that – like – 25 aye.

Celia : Cause ye needed 120 fathom o rope or something.

Alan : That wis jist his – *his system* – his preference,like. It wis the same wi him wi the lines. *Right?* A haddock line's set up maybe say twa fit or three fit ivery hook bit maist o the haddocks wis caught at the Shald Water an yer father - he didna ging ti the Shald Water. It wis maistly codlins wi caught inbye and a line wis 1200 hooks. So fit yer father did wis, ti save the wifies a bit o work, he cut it doon ti 900 hooks. *Did he?*

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<sup>29</sup> An important factor was cost, of course. The applicant had to be able to contribute £1,000 up front which may have been beyond the means of most returning ex-servicemen.

Bit he cut it oot inatween, so ye'd a langer line ti haul bit ye'd three hundred hooks less. It wis less work for the wifies but ye wis still coverin the grund. *That's interesting.* That wis his theory – for catchin codlins like cause a haddock seemed ti bunch up a lot mair. Hooks wis spaced like that. Yer father cut oot the middle and they were spaced like that. So ye'd 900 hooks bit ye'd langer line than the 1200 though ye didna hae the hooks and he said it covered mair grund. *There's maybe something in that.* Well, that wis his theory. *That wis his theory.* 900 – it wis ti save the wifies work an aa.<sup>30</sup>

Celia : I sometime heard mi father sayin, if they couldna get t the sea or something like that ti mi mither – “Are ye gaen ti bait anither six hunks?”

Alan : Ah well, ye see, mebbe did that then bit that's fit he did – 900 hooks – fin I started. I'd only half a line fin I started the sae and then fin I went next year myself, mi mither sheeled and baited 900. *Very good.* ....

Celia : But there ye are then – ye got a certain amount o - I suppose ye could say training fae mi father?

Alan ; Oh aye – definitely, aye. Nae doot aboot that. Oh dear, - ye could even - I dah think ye could even – entitle it ti twa and half year if ye hidna hin that like. But he wis aye – I dah ken – he wis aye for the young lads. *Yes, he wis.* He wis alwis for the young lads. Alwis.

Celia : My father felt that if kent onything he should pass it on ti folk. It shouldna be kept a secret and it should just be ...

Alan : He wis aye for the young lads. The lads that he hid ti the pool at Montrose and aathing wis unbelievable. *That's right.* He wis alwis for the young lads. Alwis. *That's certainly true – aye*<sup>31</sup> *He took an interest.* I couldna even hae thocht o ...

Celia : But how did ye get on when ye started wi yer ain boat? Did ye still caa it ...

Aan : Wi just left the name – aye – It wis – well, we did aa right but nae nothing spectacular. And then we went ti the lines and then gin this time it getting a bittie hard ken ti get a line baited like. We – Alan Mackie, he got marriet – *You werena marriet at this time?* No, I wisna marriet – no. Alan Mackie left – he got marriet - so  
....

## **End of Side 1 of Tape 1**

## **Tape 1, Side 2**

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<sup>30</sup> This has proved highly interesting for the interviewer who did not fully realise how innovative her father's fishing system was!

<sup>31</sup> In the days before buses were easily available my father used our van to ferry several young lads from the village to the Montrose Swimming Pool of a Saturday morning I well remember our weekly visits there and the boys piled into the back of the van. I, of course, got the privileged front passenger seat! It was my father who taught use to swim too.

Celia : Right - Side 2 – Alan – continue fit ye said. Ye were gaen ti the sea yersel for the first time.

Alan : I went mysel. I went ti the lines for the winter and then the creels and then eh, David Craig – he wis in the Merchant Navy – and he decided ti come hame. He wis a year aulder than me and he come wi me for – it wis jist aboot a year – we went the twa o us. And then wi got – eh – well, we couldna get the lines baited, that’s fit it wis – so we thocht well, see if wi can get a bigger boat and mebbe ging ti the trawl.... – couldna get the lines baited, so gin this time – I wisna marriet like but I wis on the wye to get marriet and eh – so we went – this wis wi Douglas Welsh and David Craig – we went ti see a boat doon at North Berwick and eh, the boy wis sellin it – and twa ithter lads and so we bocht that. That wis in 197 – 7.

Celia : Would you say that line fishing was tailin aff at that time? *Oh aye – that’s richt.* It wis already tailin aff at that time.



**Heading for the Harbour Bar one Saturday morning in 1978 after work on the boats was complete. We had the Morning Star (ME 106) at that time.**

Alan : Definitely it wis Well, onybody – well, the like o me – wimmen jist widna doh it. So we bocht this boat ti ging ti the trawl wi and eh – it wis terrible pohr. It wis a pretty bad time for the fishing at that time aa ower. We struggled for a hale year, we struggled wi it. Wi made a livin but nothing spectacular. And then – I got marriet in 1978 – so that wis us – she wisna gaen ti – well, she didna ken fit baitin wis. We hid that boat till 1979 and then – she wis a pretty auld boat – so we’d see if we could get a bittie mair

modern a boat – so we trawled 1980 and bocht a boat .... – eh it wis jist a wee bittie langer – same engine bit it wis twice the boat and we hid that for three year. We did weel wi that. The first year we hid a struggle bit eftir that we did weel. At that time we hid good years wi that boat like.

Celia : And that wis trawlin? Far wis ye fishin? Beyond the Shald Water or at the Shald Water?

Alan : Trawlin . No, we’d been at the Shald Water and in the winter time we wis trawlin at the back o the rocks here. There wis codlins there at that time. We did weel like. Celia ; Wid ye describe it as inshore trawlin, Alan? Alan : Aye, we did weel. We wis braakin the law at the time there like bit aabody did it. Well, aa the boats o that class did it.

Celia : How big a boat are ye speakin about?

Alan : She wis 45 fit, 45 fit. And we poot a bigger engine intil’ t and that jist made aa the difference like. Put anither 60 horse power intil’ t - half the horse power again – 110 ti 172 and, well, that made an affa difference.

Celia : Now tell me how you kent exactly fit ti doh wi trawlin cause yer past experience didna ...How did ye ken fit ti doh? Did somebody gie ye a few tips?

Alan : Other than Steven Morrision and the ither trawl lads – we were the first eens at the trawl here – and Johnny Stewart. We were the first eens at the trawl here. Well, they were at the trawl in the last twa years I wis wi yer father. I wis oot for a trip – I’d seen it done. Ken I’d been oot and seen it done and it wis them that gied me aa the tips

Celia : How does it differ? This ‘ll maybe be a stupid question but how fundamentally does it differ fae seine net ?

Alan : Well, the seine net, ken the seine net, I said it wis – the trawl wis a claymore : the seine net wis a rapier. Is that fit ye caa them? *Yes, yes* . That wis a rapier - the trawl wis a claymore – jist bang –

Celia : So the seine net is much mair sophisticated, precise? *Mair refined*.

Alan : The seine net – ye put a dan ower - - ran oot yer nets and put a flag - ye hauled the net ti the boat. The trawl ye put the net awa - and the doors and jist charge.

Celia ; Right. How far – is there a difference in the depths o the water?

Alan : No. no. Ye could trawl richt up ti the beach but ye couldna seine net on the hard grund, the rocky grund and that wis – *jist because the net wid be ripped?* – ripped, aye but the trawl poot on bobbins and then fit they caa’d rock hoppers – rubber discs and kept the net aff the buddom.<sup>32</sup> Ye still tore the net a lot but ..... we caught codlins on the hard grund but if it didna come on to saft grund the seine net wis nae yohse. But we could ging on the saft grund an aa, ye see. Trawl jist went aawye.

Celia : So the trawl is actually scoopin up ... everything

Alan : Aye, well, in a wye – no, it wisna as bad as that. Single trawlin wisna bad : pair trawlin wis a different thing. *Pair trawlin involves...?* Twa boats touwin their nets – *but dis it involve tikkin a deeper ...?*

Alan : Na – the net wis aboot fower times the size. Far ye jist took a certain amount o fish wi a single trawl, wi pair trawlin ye took them aa like. Ony size. Ye took a lot mair sma fish than iver ye did at the single trawl.

Celia : Bit neen o the Gurden boats did pair trawlin?

Alan : Well, we went three- fower weeks – that wis it.

Celia : At pair trawlin?

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<sup>32</sup> Rock hoppers were used in trawling

Alan ; Aye – that wis later on like

Celia : Fa were ye pair trawlin wi?

Alan : We pair trawled wi the *Hazel*. That wis anither Gurden boat

Celia : Fa hid the *Hazel*?

<sup>33</sup>Alan : Ian Barbour. *Ian Barbour*. And Douglas Welsh like. That wis 1988. We only gid aboot fower or five weeks. It his a lot ti answer fir – the pair trawlin, I wid



**On board Concord (ME126) in 1983**

say, like – *For the ...* - For the demise o the fish, like – definitely. So – we got that boat and went for a couple o years onyye – the winter – we wound up wi the codlin. We wis getting touwed in and we lost the boat . We wis getting touwed in – *I've a vague memory o that*. It wis an affa nicht, like. It wisna a nicht fir dohin nothing ... – we hid ti bide oot till the wattir wis comin in again. <sup>34</sup> So we jist waited till there wis wattir in – and we wis

gaen ti be comin in - so onywywe we'd a faux pas <sup>35</sup> - we'd ti get touwed in wi Steven. <sup>36</sup> We

wis touwed in. It wisna a good nicht fir comin in bit there wis nae choice. We were at the wrang side o the rocks, at the wrang side o the braakwattir and there wis three o us aboard the boat – me and Robert Ceretti and Bruce Dorrit. <sup>37</sup> They were jist young lads at the time – 19 / 20. Onywywe the boat come inbye ti the braakwattir and they were aa at the stern and Douglas Paton <sup>38</sup> and Peter Morrison and Douglas Welsh –

Douglas Paton wis shoutin – I nevir heard them. Threw a rope ti me and took they twa on ti land and they threw a rope ti me and I went aff the boat and the she gaed awa fae the pier and she nevir came back inbye again and ... eh ... we wis aff - that wis aa that onybody wis worried aboot and I aye mind Doug Paton – he wis lookin eftir wi ken – ye'd lost yer boat – and he says, “Ach, ye'll get plenty mair o them,” he says. “The three o you



**With my youngest daughter Kathleen standing beside our trawl gear. Boat at this time (1986) was the Hazel (ME 47)**

lads is here – ye'll aisy get anithir een o them. Dinna worry aboot that.” And that wis me – I wisna gaen back again eftir that like. I wisna gaen back. I said ti misel – I'm nae gaen back but onywywe I got persuaded wi an auld mannie. He says, “Ye'll hae to

<sup>33</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Gourdon is a tidal harbour

<sup>35</sup> The net had become wound up in the propellor

<sup>36</sup> Steven Morrison, Skipper of the *Quest*.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Dorward – Dorrit is the Gurden pronunciation.

<sup>38</sup> Another Gourdon Skipper, older than Alan and Steven.

ging back. Ye canna doh nothing else.” So, we got the insurance money for the boat – it wisna a lot like – said –well, fit are wi gaen ti doh. We’ll hae ti get anither boat, so we went to the Broch <sup>39</sup> and saw a bigger boat, wi a bigger engine. It wis caa’d the *Hazel* and it wis ten fit langer – 55 fit. It wis a big boat for Gurden And we bocht that in January 1985.

And it’s queer thing bit it seemed ti be – the first year we bocht a boat, it aye seemed ti be a struggle. But the fishin picked up eftir that and we did weel enough wi that boat and aa for the time. Nevir mad a fortune bit fir the time – and then things wis gaen aa richt. Welsh said “We’ll try and get a grant noo and get a boat built.” <sup>40</sup> I wis a bittie faird like. I says, I dinna think I could doh this like. *Well, it’s a big investment.* Aye, it wis, aye. Well, we went fir it onywye. We got the grant fir it, so we got near half o it for the grant like. We wis lucky, we got the new grant and aa. At that time there **wis** a new grant..... We got the boat built – 19 – she started in 1987 and she wis launched in 1988 and we gid ti the seine net, 1988, so that’s 19 year past noo - *The Emma Kathleen* <sup>41</sup>



**With Clem Jolly, partner in Mackay Boatbuilders, Arbroath on the launch day of the Emma Kathleen in 1986.**

That’s fit we caa’d it. We didna ken fit ti caa it. Mi daughters wis jist little at the time – so we thocht aboot that. Naebody objected til it, so we caa’d it that. (*Indistinct part*) We went ti see the – we went ti get the boat registered and we didna ken fit number to pick. Aa the boats we hid wis – ME 208, 106, 126 and 47. 132 – that wis yer father’s boat – *ME 132* - and we didna ken the difference atween. Pit aa this names in and then Douglas Welsh’s father’s een wis 155. There wis a lot o things. His grandfather’s een on his mither’s side wis – I canna mind the number o it but we thocht aboot that and aa. So we wis gaen ti pit them inti a thing and haul it oot jist ti see fit it wis gaen ti be bit – and we couldna get 208 cause somebody hid it. And I said ti the boy, at

Montrose, the registry boy, “Ye dinna hae 87, di ye? ME 87? Naebody his it, di they?” He says, no. I says, “Wii, fit aboot that then?” Douglas Welsh says me, “Foo that then?” “That wis the year she wis built” And that wis it.

Celia : So ye were able ti finance that yoohsin kind a Grant and Loan and savings and whatever. Right. But did ye share that wi Welshie?

Alan :Aye, I hid 27 shares, he hid 64. I hid 27 oot o 64. So we got that in 1988 and gid tit he trawl and we did weel. Things wis aright. There wis fower o wi aboard the boat fir a start and then things started ti ging a bittie teucher and we hid ti cut doon ti three.

Celia : And the equipment that ye hid – ye hid a wheelhouse and various maybe mair sophisticated pieces o equipment. Tell me fit pieces o equipment ye hid by that time

<sup>39</sup> Fraserburgh

<sup>40</sup> Douglas Welsh, the fish merchant is the senior partner with Alan in their fishing ventures, with Alan as Skipper and Welsh as non-sea-going investor.

<sup>41</sup> Alan’s current boat, named for his two daughters.



and how did ye ken fit ti purchase or did ye get advice on how ti use them and operate them successfully.

Alan : Aye, well, usually there is some lad his een. Ye ging aboard his boat and ye see it and that's it bit gin this time the radar wis far, far ahead o fit the radars wis fin we started trawlin. Ye yohsed ti hae to look doon in a hood bit then ye could jist look like lookin at a TV gin this time. Ken before that ye yoohsed ti hae to look doon a hood but nae noo. Ye yoohsed ti hae a chart toh – it wis like graph paper. Caa'd it the graphs, wi numbers and ye gaed on that. Then we got this video een – it wis like a computer and like it wis aa coloured.

Celia ; And di ye yoohse that – constantly?

Alan : I've still got it like. It's (outdated?) noo – I still yohse it.

Celia : Tell me how that works then, Alan. Ye maak a decision that ye're gaen ti fish in a certain place, di ye , then pull oot the relevant chart?

Alan : According ti – bi this time it wis .... discs ye put in. I started on the paper chart and ye yoohsed the ... aff o that and the lines and as ye wis gaen alang it wis drawin the lines on the video een, ye see.

Celia : And how di ye ken how ti – how di ye steer? Ye still hiv a compass?

Alan : Oh aye - ..... still .... wi a compass (There is a portion here that is hard to decipher).

Celia : It sounds quite tricky.

Alan : Ah – no, it's nae really. Aathing is the first time ye yoohse it bit this wis a great thing this video plotter. We'd gotten this tapes. It's jist experience.

Celia : Is it like sat. nav. – ken...?



Alan : We've got sat.nav. Aye, we've got a GDS.

Celia : Di ye use aa these systems? Di ye think – oh I'll jist need ti use this ..?

Alan : No – the GDS drives a square on the plotter and that's you. It moves as ye're movin.

Celia : So are you actually conscious o maakin a decision far ye've been telt there'll be a catch – far ye suspect there'll be a catch?

Alan : Suspect. Jist experience. Jist experience. See the trawl – wi the trawl ye can start, start a

**With Robbie Andrews on the stern of the Scallop Dredger Emma Kathleen. Robbie is from Stonehaven but was born in Gourden. He had his own boat at the time the "Trustful"**

trawl noo six mile aff Gurden and ye trawl 't three and half oors and ye're six mile aff Montrose. Ye've covered a lot a grund. And if ye get a big – if ye're getting a lot o fish, ye jist retraced yer tracks – back the same line, ye see.

Celia : Could ye – can ye record that ye've used that particular route or ...

Alan : Oh aye, ye pit it on ti the disc, it'll bide there for ever more.

Celia : And then ye can ging back and try that again or ye could try – say, anither mile further oot or half a mile or whatever?

Alan : Same as aa the wrecks and aathing wis aa pootin on this charts and ye hid that for ever more ti miss that.

Celia : Were there a lot o wrecks?

Alan : Aye, there were a lot o wrecks oot there, a lot o wrecks. *Really?* Aye. See, compared that ti fin I started wi yer father. Fin I started, it wis his compass and his watch. That wis the lot. He didna even a hae a soonder. *No.* His compass and his watch – the twa things - .... that's aa they hid then.

Celia The tide tables.

Alan : Aye, aabody hid them – the Smiths<sup>42</sup> – Ae day we wisna at the sea, he went ti Montrose, I aye mind - ti the broo it wis<sup>43</sup> and he went and bocht een o thae – they were about £2 – mind o that - Smiths pocket watch. *Goodness.* Aabody hid them. That wis that. Bit compared wi fit wi hiv noo, it's jist unbelievable.

Celia : Ye hiv a much mair sophisticated approach noo.

Alan : Aye, aye. It's getting mair sophisticated aa the time.

Celia : Are you happy ti accept aa they different things as they come alang? Di ye quite like ti keep up wi the trends?

Alan : Aye, well, I wis thinkin about gettin in the latest thing, thinking about it.

Celia : Which is?

Alan : Which is a thing that maps the buddom o the sea, in 3D and it comes up on a flat screen, 3D bit it's jist a case o if ye dinna get it, yer gaen a be left ahint bit the thing about it wis, they're getting too good noo. It's jist about got it ti capacity, well, I think. They've jist about got it ti capacity – aathing like.

Celia : And that's really gaen ti maak sure that the demise o fishin is total.

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<sup>42</sup> Alan is referring to a specific, pocket watch popular with fishermen at the time.

<sup>43</sup> The broo is the bureau – where uneployment benefit was cleared.

Alan : It's the same auld story. If ye dinna doh this, yer gaen ti be left ahint. I mean, I spoke ti a lad yesterday that hid this machine and he's hin it fir mair than a year and his scallop fishin his went up – he's caught half as much again, he reckons.

Celia : Noo tell me, why scallop fishin wisna – scallop fishin wis unheard of in Gurden, totally – crabs and lobsters.

Alan : I wis gaen ti come on ti that. *Right, okay.* 1993 – that wis absolutely hopeless – fishin wis hopeless – the price o diesel hid went up and we wis really, really strugglin. That bad – it wis bad ti get crews – we couldna doh nothing and – *That wis the year my father deid* – aye, 93, aye. Wi come – there hid been a couple o Manx boats hid come across and started scallop fishin oot o Stoney and they'd done really, really weel. *Fae the Isle o Man? I didna ken they'd come ti Stoney.*<sup>44</sup> Isle o Man. This lads – one o them hid stopped years afore somewye oot here and they'd gotten .... and he'd nevir come back. It hid been West coast lads that hid come roond and they come roond and aa .... (*The sentence is indistinct*).... for years and they'd come doon and they'd faain in wi scallops aa roond aboot here.<sup>45</sup> So – Robbie Andra and Ian Balgowan, they were the first lads at Stoney – they went ti that cause Robbie hid seen fit wis happenin. He'd said ti Douglas Welsh the year afore – cause he yohsed ti speak ti Robert and Robert wid say “Ga wa and tell Alan ti ga wa and get the boat shiftit ti ging ti this.” And he come ti me and said that, - Robbie hid said ti me - and I said, “I'm nae very keen. I dah wint ti dale wi the boat cause it's affa hard on the boat. At this time the boat wis only five year auld. They went and cut bits aff the boat and aathing.

Celia : Ye'll hae ti tell us what's involved wi scallop fishing, Alan. It's nae the same system as the trawl.

Alan : No, no. Nuck. So fit happened wis, that winter we wis really, really struggling and the three at that time wis Derek Morrison and Neil Mackie and I said ti Derek Morrison, “Mind the day yet” and it wis afore Christmas – no, it wis eftir Christmas and I said ti him, “Derek, fit are wi gaen ti doh? Wi hiv two choices here”. Cause I aye asked them aathing. I didna, I wisna ...<sup>46</sup> I aye said ti mi crew – fit di ye think? I wid doh fit I wis gaen ti doh bit I still asked them. I said ti them, “We've two choices here. We'll ga wa wi the boat – ti ga wa ti ging ti the scallops or we've ti ging ti the prawns at the West coast. I didna want ti ging awa there.

Celia : Ye cann prawn fish here?

Alan : Aye, ye can. Oh aye, yeah – bit nae twelve months o the year. Ye could ging ti the West coast or else North Shields I didna want ti ging awa and I kent he didna an aa. So I said ti Derek Morrison – “Fit di ye think?” He says ti me, “Dah ask me.” I says, “Right I'll awa and ging ti the scallops and we'll get the boat” – they've ti cut the shelter aff ti accommodate the scallop dredges.

Celia : Fit did ye hae ti get cut aff? Fit's that?

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<sup>44</sup> Interviewer expresses loud surprise!

<sup>45</sup> The area was very fruitful – a virgin ground for scallops then

<sup>46</sup> Alan indicates he was something of a democratic skipper who discussed things with the crew, rather than imposing his will on them though he did go ahead with his plans thereafter.

Alan : Shelter . We'd a back shelter by this time – we gutted fish onboard the shelter and aathing. We'd ti cut it aff to maak room for the scallop dredges.

Celia : Could ye describe a scallop dredge?

Alan : Well, a scallop dredge is two fit six broad and it's got fit ye caa a teeth bar – it's like metal spikes stuck and ye trawl, six o them on each side o the boat.

Celia : Like prongs, like forks?

Alan : Aye like forks, aye. Swords, ye caa them. Ye trawl them along the sea bed and it taaks up aa the ....

Celia : Are they trailed a the end oa rope or on chains or fit wye are they ...

Alan : No, six on each side o the boat and towed for a hour and a half or twa oors enough ti maak them fuhl o steens and scallops and aathing, shove aa the steens back, pick the scallops oot.

Celia : I'm picturing the prongs or fit iver ye caa them that's teen aa the scallops bit far's the container fir ..

Alan ; Well, at the back o that there's a chain, like ... that's made o chain roond the rings weldit thegithir – we caa it chain bellies. It's jist about three fit deep, about two fit – it hids a lot o steens. The scallops and steens ging in there. Ye've ti empty each one individually and pick oot the scallops and shove awa the steens <sup>47</sup>

Celia : Far di ye empty them intil?

Alan : On ti the deck. *Onti the deck. So the steens are nae huge then?*

Alan : Well, fit wid that be – twa fit (*Indicates the size by gesture*)

Celia : Really. So ye empty that carefully on ti the deck?

Alan : Aye bit – sometimes ye get them like that. And ye trawl – pick the scallops oot, throw the steens awa and doh the same again.

Celia : And now, how .. fin you're at the start pittin the dredges in, are ye pittin them ower the stern or ...

Alan : Richt ower the side o the boat on the dredge side –pit them ti the side they sit – lift them up wi a rope ...

Celia : Wi a winch?

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<sup>47</sup> Alan later supplied fuller details about the procedures and devices for scallop fishing over the phone, explaining about the dredges, with forward pointing prongs and the teeth bar, with downward pointing teeth, resembling a sort of farming harrow. The dredges which are towed are spring-loaded, casting the scallops up and behind into the chain bellies system, with its chain-linked and netted “container”.

Alan : Oh aye, wii a winch. Let them doon and then the winch hauls them ti fit they caa an oot ledder which is a pole stickin oot fae the boat and start ti doh the same at the ithir side and ...<sup>48</sup>

Celia : You sound incredibly knowledgeable about aathing. Ye've obviously picked up, ye ken, the technique for each type o fishin.

Alan : They didna ken nothing about that like That's one thing they kent nothing about. I brocht it oot o Arbroath fin the boat wis gettin cut up ti get steel put doon the side o the boat – a bloke, he took us oot .... and we shot the gear wi the winch, touwed it five meenits and hauled it back and that wis aa we kent about it.

Celia : And di ye nevir feel slightly, ye ken, concerned or mabe a wee bittie faird – Aye - at the thocht – Oh right, I've ti pit this new technique inti practice and there's these members o my crew – they're needin a bit o trainin as weel. How are wi gaen ti manage?

Alan : Aye, we managed bit it wis aithir that or the West coast and I didna want ti doh that. So that wis 1994 – and the first year we gid ti the scallops we did affa weel, affa weel and that wis kennin nothing about it. If I kent fit I ken noo, and ye could turn the clock back then, we wid hiv done affa, affa weel. (*Alan more or less repeats this point about hindsight*).

Celia : And fit di ye ken noo then?

Alan : Well, at that time, it wis jist a case throwin them ower the side and then down the handle and away ye went. Ivery haul we hid wis fuhl o steens. Well, I ken how ti get oot o that noo.

Celia : How di ye get oot o that?

Alan : Well, ye've ti work wi springs. There are springs on the dredges and it depends foo ticht and slack they are and how much wire ye shoot and how fest the boat's gaen. We can catch the same scallops noo, and widna catch half the steens. (*Alan explains this in a little more detail*).

Celia : So fit's a typical catch o scallops if it's a good catch, Alan?

Alan : If ye touwed for say two oors, if ye could get fae fower ti six baskets o scallops, that's a good enough catch for us. At that time, we wis gettin fower, five, six, sevin, aicht, aye ten bit noo this year, a couple o good weeks, wi wis gettin fower and five – that's eight baskets but if we get fower a day, fower minimum for a two oor touw, ..... ye wid get a pey oot o that bit it's a struggle.

Celia : Di ye detect ony faain awa on the scallop scene? Aye, *this year*. And is that a ominous sign?

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<sup>48</sup> The dredges are lowered over the side of the boat from a "pole". Any errors in the description of the devices and procedures are those of the interviewer, not the interviewee, of course!

Alan : Aye, oh aye – for the size o boats.

Celia : How mony boats are scallop fishin roond about Gurden?

Alan : There's nae a lot. There's only us. We're th only een but there's strangers like and there nae - . We've got six dredges but some o them's got aside fourteen

Celia : Is that nae – excuse me if I'm wrang bit is that nae a case o them over-fishin? Is that nae bein excessive?

Alan : I dah ken. I wid say it wis. See, fin we started the scallops, there wis a lot mair boats at it. And the were aa like us, sax or sevin a side and fin it come pohr weather they were in the herber. That things noo is like machines.

Celia : It's almost like factory farmin except it's at the sea.

Alan : Jist about. Well, the farmers doh it – well, this is jist my personal opinion, they're aa crewed wi Poles and Lithuanians and aathing cause they canna get Scots folk ti doh it. That's telling ye something.

Celia : Yes, I suppose

Alan : The skippers are Scots and mebbe.... Well, een o the Monstrose lads wis (workin?) on a boat bit there was a Scots Skipper, Scots Mate and Engineer and three Poles or Lithuanians. They've got 14 aside. *The next portion is indistinct but Alan speaks about the "stranger" boats dumping over the side and confesses to be worried about it.*

Celia : Far di ye sell them till, Alan?

Alan : We sell them ti a company in Peterheid – Seafood Ecosse. That's telling ye far they've come fae. 99% o aathing that comes oot o that factory gings ti France. I've seen it misel. In the Loire Valley –

Celia ; Di ye get a good price?

Alan : We get a better price noo than they've been at this time o year since wi started. In real terms as they say, it's nae a good price. Wi get £10 a kilo and the year wi started, 13 year ago at this time, w iwis getting £9 a kilo – so there's nae really a big difference.

Celia : But di ye hae huge overheads? For – eh – is it still diesel?

Alan : Oh aye – diesel- diesel the lest twa years went through the roof.

Celia : And yer equipment – does that require a lot o maintenance?

Alan : Aye, well, the actual scallop gear dis. It's expensive ti ging ti the sea like.

Celia : And ye've yer crew ti ... pay

Alan : Aye – it's the diesel – Ye've got ti hae it. *Alan indicates diesel is major concern.*

Celia : Are you typically – how lang are you oot at the sea typically – on a typical day?

Alan : Thirty-six oors.

Celia : Thirty-six oors – so it's nae a day then.

Alan : If it's weather.

Celia : Tell me aboot that then cause I'm a bittie worried about the tape runnin oot. Fit wid a typical day be like? I want ti ask ye that.

Alan : A day – say wi were up at five a clock i the morning - depends far wir gaen - we could be twa oors fae the herber – jist say we are and then – the boat's shortened,<sup>49</sup> touwed maybe an oor and a half ti see if there's a scallop there. If there's a scallop there, we'll try ti bide in that area aa day.... *Alan indicates that such a valuable patch can be over-fished* - bit fit I div is if we've gottin a patch, I winna be back till't the next week – I'll lave it – *Save it* – and it'll still be here. *Alan indicates that he would try this area again later if stuck unlike the factory style boats which would fish it to extinction.* Whereas thae lads it's jist a case o – *totally clear it – scrape bare.* Aye, so we'll mebbe hae twelve or fourteen times that lested two hours a time, then awa back ti the herber, land wir stuff bit ither than that, hae a night in wir bed, ga wa back and doh the same again, that wid be wir week in an ideal world bit the weather - *and that's fishin oot o Montrose?* And here. And here. Depends on the weather. Wir either here or Montrose, Celia, that's it.

Celia : But, di ye land it here?

Alan : We land – *and then pit it on a larry?* Pit it on Douglas Welsh's larry He taaks them ti – fin he gings ti the market in the mornin – he taaks them ti Aiberdeen and ..... Aiberdeen and Peterheid ..... That's for ten year we've landed. He taaks them hisel like – fir his shops and aathing but maist o them ging ti Seafood Ecosse – that's them.<sup>50</sup>

Celia : There is word, of course, aboot Aiberdeen Fish Market bein closed completely and Peterheid wid taak ower, wid it?

Alan : Well, Douglas Welsh his been getting a lot o fish aff the ferry fae Shetland. Ken, he waits for the ferry comin in and he gets fish fae there. So he disna think he's gaen ti hae ti ging ti Peterheid. Bit Aiberdeen's kinda packed up the last twa weeks

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<sup>49</sup> "Shortened" is an approximation of the word said : it is indistinct

<sup>50</sup> Douglas Welsh, the Gourdon fishmerchant has various businesses, including a number of fish shops in Aberdeenshire/Aberdeen. Some of Alan's catch is sold in Douglas Welsh's shops, with most going to Seafood Ecosse.

bit there's nae the boats. It's as simple as that. It's worryin a right. There's nae the boats.

Celia : So, I'm beginning ti get a picture fae ye bit jist – I'm jist a bittie nervous about the tape. This demise o the fishin industry across the board wid include trawlin and scallops and aa different types. So fit is your theory aboot that then, Alan? Fit di you attribute that till? Is it just a number o factors?

Alan : There's nae fish aboot here - inshore, there's nae fish.

Celia : It's been fished bare?

Alan : Aye – I widna – I'm nae shoor. I dah ken if it's something ti doh wi the climate. Honestly I dinna ken bit I ken – the haddock fishin aboot here – the pair trawlin hid a lot ti answer for for that cause the wye the Arbroath folk wis pair trawlin and they say it theirsels, the amount o fish they trawled wis unbelievable. Young fish. Single boat trawlin didna kill the same amount o young fish and they're aye on aboot the sea's warmin up, that's fit it is bit whether it's that or no, I honestly dinna - I mean there's fish doon the Yorkshire coast. If the sea's warmin up, how is there nae neen here? Naebody kens bit I ken one thing, they canna come fae Auchenblae.<sup>51</sup> .... It his ti come fae ootbye.

Celia : They say something like maybe the Gulf Stream. I ken that maybe disna sound realistic roond here but there are changes that are mair widespread.

Alan : Oh aye – see – I dah think onybody kens. They think they're gaen ti save the world wi aa this carbon footprint and aathing.

## **End of Tape 1, Side 2**

### **Tape 2, Side A / Side 3 of the whole**

**Celia : I think this should be right. This would be Side 3 then in the Interview wi Alan Donaldson and we were discussing maybe global aspects, affectin the decline in fishing. So – continuing wi that.**

Alan : Well, ...we're hearing aboot the sea getting hetter and aathing. Whither that's true or no I dinna ken bit there's nae fish aboot here. I ken that. It's as simple as that. I dinna ken how. Naebody kens how.

Celia : Fit di ye maak o the government's attempts and the EU's attempts at different restrictions – days per week for certain types o fishing, decommissioning etc?

Alan : It's affa hard on thae lads that's still gaen tae the white fish, that days at sea. That's – there his ti be regulations. Dinna get me wrang. There his ti be regulations bit, I mean awa and tell Tesco's that yer only workin three days a week. I mean ti fish. - that's fit they're getting telt. There's mair – they big boats is tellin me there's

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<sup>51</sup> Auchenblae is a country village – not on the coast!



mair fish noo than they've seen for years. But there's nae fish aboot here an far we yohsed ti fish. I dinna ken how.

Celia : Di ye mean there's nae fish at the Shald Water even? <sup>52</sup>

Alan : Nuck, no ye see there's nothing there.

Celia ; Nothing there. And fit's the ither main fishing area ti the North? Fit di ye caa it again? The Shald Water and ...? North - Catterline wye. <sup>53</sup>

Alan : Tod Heid. In by the Tod Heid? <sup>54</sup>

*A small portion of the tape has been wiped at this point but the Interviewee seems to remember that the fishing area in question was called the Hirst.*

Alan : But thae big boats at Peterheid - they're workin awa ti the East and North-East – say there's mair fish than there's been for ages. There's bound ti be cause there's nae ither boats. Fish'll come back bit far they come back fae – this is a mystery.

Celia : Fit aboot that idea o waste, Alan. You mentioned, ye ken that a huge amount o fish were bein ta'en but they were undersized or they were killed or were thrown back and so on. Can that be dealt wi at aa?

Alan : Nuck – no, I dinna think so but they're dumping bags o cod noo. They're getting that much cod and they've made a quota for that. Yer nae even allowed ti land it.

Celia : Yer scarin me noo then. Is it nae even for fish meal?

Alan : No, no – there wis a photo in the Fishing News twa/three weeks ago. The boys hid ti dump a bag o cod because they werena legally allowed ti land it. That's jist stupid. The hale thing's stupid, *It is*. I ken one thing. There his ti be regulation o some kind. There his ti be.

Celia : And is there ony current regulation on scallop fishing?

Alan : Aye. The regulation on scallop fishing is the regulation on how much teeth ye kin hae on each dredge and the size o each dredge and they're jist awa ti bring in new amount o dredges.

Celia : That's fit I wis gaen ti say because the boats that are yohsin fourteen might be rstricted .

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<sup>52</sup> The Shald Water was a favourite Gurden fishing ground – the Montrose Bank – which formerly yielded excellent catches.

<sup>53</sup> Alan suggest a name which is indistinct . Interviewer seems to recall the name Hirst for the north fishing ground

<sup>54</sup> The famous lighthouse, near Kinneff, now decommissioned itself, well known to all Gurden fishers for its lowing cry during fog, compared to the shrill ringing tone of the Gurden fog horn.

Alan : There gaen – they’re actually supposed ti bide outside twelve miles the eens that yohse fourteen – supposed ti – and if ye yohse mair than eight, ye’ve ti bide ootside six mile – so that’s helped us a bit bit then – I mean we broke the law fin we wis trawlin but they lads jist braak the law – same as fit we did but we’re the only boat that’s got less than aicht dredges aboot here like. But there his ti be regulation in aa fishin I wid say o some kind.

Celia : Do you think the scallop fishin’ll jist hae a period o time fan it’s viable as well- like mebbe seine nets declined – trawlin – they hiv ti ging awa ti Iceland or something like that and scrape the hael bottom o the sea up. Then ye’ve got yer scallop fishin – di ye think that’ll maybe .....

Alan : Could aisy – yip – aathing seems ti get a turn richt enough. I mean – Jimmy Broon hid ti stop the creels cause ye couldna maak a livin.<sup>55</sup> The creels is a good thing i the noo.

Celia : The Stoney lads – I think there’s three boats at Stoney fish creels – and they get some.<sup>56</sup>

Alan : The creels – aa roond the coast o Scotland – the creels is the boom thing i the noo. *Right*. Definitely, cause – that wis Jimmy Broon hid ti stop – he hid 300 creels himsef – that wis unheard o at that time and he’d ti stop.

Celia : But, it’s maakin a comeback?

Alan : Oh aye – aa roond Scotland – in the Fishing News aa ye see’s a new creel boat. *Why’s that?* It’s jist – well, the West Coast especially they’ve built up markets there. They land them inti trucks and they’re jist ta’en richt ti Spain. And they fish for things, that fin I started wi yer father, - *He widna hiv looked at it* – if ye got ony o them, ye jist battered them aff the side o the boat bit there wisna much o them at that time. This is anither thing that’s – we caa’d them Fleein Crabs – Velvet Crabs is their name. The Spaniard ging daft for them. *Right*. And they’re oot here noo, they’re catchin boxes o them faras ten year ago, there wisna neen o them. *Why’s that?*

Celia : Is that a hopeful sign then?

Alan : Well, it is and it’s nae. I mean – it’s keeping a lot o creel boats on the East Coast o Scotland going that widna hiv managed to keep going bit how they ... how they prosperin wi thae Flying Crabs? Fit’s cheenged ti maak them propser? Something’s cheenged.

Celia : Yes, yes, I see fit ye mean. It could be slightly sinister then – fit it is that’s led ti them comin ti the fore like that.

Alan : Aye – the theory we wis thinking wis eh – and this wis me speakin ti Steven Morrison, Wayne Barbour<sup>57</sup> – this is fit we think. We reckon that the codlins ett

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<sup>55</sup> Jimmy Brown, a Gourdon fishman a little younger than Alan, is now Harbour Master at both Stonehaven and Gourdon. His current boat is a fine yacht! He went creel fishing perhaps in the 80s.

<sup>56</sup> Stoney – Stonehaven declined as a fishing port long before Gourdon started to suffer. Today it is largely concerned with pleasure boats.

them and they're saft and that kept them doon. There's nae codlins noo.<sup>58</sup> That's oor theory. There's boxes o them. Sometimes if it wisna for them ...

Celia ; And that again is gaen ti the Continent, is it?

Alan : Aa ti Spain.

Celia : So that's taen by a larry – far ti?

Alan : Richt ti Spain. *Right. (Again a small portion of tape has been wiped but U believe that it referred to the Johnshaven Shellfish Merchant, Murray McBay for transportation to Spain).* But that lad that comes doon ti Kevin and Derek Birse<sup>59</sup> - they yohsed ti land ontie this ithir larry and the boy picks up aathing fae the East Coast and just kept on gaen ti Spain. Afore ye got the ferry fae Port – Pompey<sup>60</sup> - sent them there or something ..... and dropped doon through France, I dinna ken but they went richt ti Spain.

Celia ; Now, I'm interested in anithir aspect that ye brought up – speaking about that a lot o Polish and Lithuanian fishermen have joined the ranks. Is that in a sense – it's worryin in anithir sense in that – does that mean that there are nae young folk coming forward? *Aye. Scottish youths. Why's that, Alan? Is it jist considered too much like hard work?*

Alan : That's affa hard going, they lads workin on thae big boats like. That's affa hard going like. I mean they're workin six/sevin days at the sea, nevir in. That is hard going but I hiv.... lads wi me. *Is that Gurden lads? Aye, one's a Gurden lad, one's a Montrose lad bit he's .... bit I mean, I've said it ti them – if I wis you lads I wid think twice aboot dohin this bit the een fae Gurden's jist the saem as me like, fit I wis at his age, the very same. Fa's that, Alan? Ross McKenzie. His grandfather wis Davit Lownie<sup>61</sup> Aye, I ken fa ye mean. Andy – that wis yer father's rival. Andy Lownie, that's right, the White Wing. That wis the rival. Laughter.*

Celia : Friendly rivalry. So, you have a wide experience o different types o fishin then and ye said ti me that I could ask ye later on like, which in your opinion was the best or yer favourite or what wid yer comment be on the different types?

Alan : Really, if I could get a livin trawlin for fish, I wid be back at that, like. Bit I div like gaen tit he scallops, I do. *Ye do?* I'm the only een that's stuck at it aboot here. I'm the only een that seems ti really like it like bit it's a job that ye like or ye dinna like. Ian Barbour he went till it because the fish wis crap bit he shifted back. He went – he did, the only ithir alternative we hid. He noo fishes at the West Coast for

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<sup>57</sup> These Gourdon fisherman aare somewhat younger than the Gourdon skippers of the 60s, 70s and are managing to cling on to fishing out of Gourdon in some way.

<sup>58</sup> Alan clearly means in the old days the codlins consumed the Velvet Crabs which can now survive in the absence of cod.

<sup>59</sup> A father and son who shellfish in Gourdon

<sup>60</sup> Pompey is Portsmouth

<sup>61</sup> The Lownie brother, Andy and David fished out of Gourdon for many years in the *White Wing*, a boat similar in size to my father's boat, the *Trustful*..

half a year and Sheels for half a year, at the prawns. *Sheels?! Oh Shields! Shields.*<sup>62</sup> North Shields, ivery winter and he fishes 9West Coast) aa simmer and he's done that noo for about - *And does that affect his family then?* He's nae marriet – no. I've aye said I widna doh it bit I better no say cause nevir say nevir. I dah wint ti doh that like, if I can get a livin at hame bit trawlin for white fish wid jist beat gaen ti the scallops, if I kid get a livin at it bit I widna get a livin at it here. That wid be mi favourite – trawlin for white fish because if I went back ti that noo, yer nae actually legally allowed ti land fish on the pier at Gurden

Celia : Is that right? Why?

Alan : Aye, cause it's not a designated landing port.

Celia : How did it get undesignated? It must have been designated at some point cause there were huge fish markets her fin I wis a girl.<sup>63</sup>

Alan : It got undesignated, that wid be – *Cor blimey!* - five year ago, fower year ago, five year ago and we went ti see – Robert Smith,<sup>64</sup> me, aabody, Ian Barbour, Stephen, Peter, Wayne, even though they were at the creels, we aa got a meetin, well, went ti see him at Banchory fir a start and then we got a meetin wi him. He come doon the pier, Robert Smith and some EU wifie and he said he wid doh fit he could. Obviously he couldna doh enough and that's Gurden. Yer not allowed ti legally ti land – ye can land a prawn or a scallop or a partan or a labster bit ye cannot land white fish and Arbroath is not a designated landing port.<sup>65</sup> *Really. So far di the Gurden men land their fish?* There's only two boats left and they land in Aiberdeen or Peterheid or Shields. *Oh dear. Aye, oh dear!* And ti me, my idea, like, Celia is – it's like aathing else – eence ye loss it, ye nevir get it back.

Celia : So, it's a kind o – nae centralisation but it's focusing the fishing industry in a wye that's been detrimental ti smaller ports – *Definitely* –

Alan : Definitely. Anithir analogy – again Tesco again. How mony shops wis there is Gurden fin yu wis young?

Celia : Oh well, yes, quite a number.

Alan : How mony is there noo? One and it struggles. Tesco rules the world or they like ti think they do and they jist aboot do. Bit, it's gin the same wye wi the sea like. Instead o haein – that's fit I wis gaen ti say aboot aa they big scallopers. Wid they nae be better wi forty boats my size wi three Scots lads aboard it, keepin a hundred and twenty families goin than ten o this big things which his got the same amount o dredges bit it's jist like the shops ti use that analogy. Ye'd be better wi thirty boats like me wi three Scots lads aboard it. Look at the fowk they're keepin.

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<sup>62</sup> Sheels signifies sheeling mussels for line fishing in older Gourdon days, long lost, hence the Interviewer's astonishment but here it is simply a pronunciation for the port of North Shields in Northumberland!

<sup>63</sup> The Interviewer is appalled!

<sup>64</sup> Constituency M.P.

<sup>65</sup> Such measures, closing off the smaller fishing ports has clearly contributed to the demise of inshore fishing.

Celia : Yes, that's true.

Alan : Bit that's nae the wye o't

Celia : Di ye think there's aye been periods o time like this fin there's been like difficulties and problems cause I'm thinkin back ti the Cod Wars and Klondykers and that. These were the kind o things that hid a major effect on fishin and fishin families at the time

Alan : There's aye been, there'll aye be ups and doons ayewys. I canna see it ivir bein any different. It's jist toughin oot the hard eens. It's getting worse aa the time noo, ken.

Celia : And fit di ye think in general then abot the future? Are ye generally optimistic or a bittie pessimistic?

Alan : I wid be half and half – half fuhl, half empty, I wid say. *Right. Aye.* There'll aye be a livin oot there for some fowk. I'm convinced o that, like. Fit they'll be dohin, I dinna ken.

Celia : At the moment, fit is there in Gurden? How mony boats? Is it three?

Alan : Well, there's Peter and Stephen, *and they're gaen ti the prawns* – prawns – they fish for prawns aa the year roond. *And that works? They get...?* Well, struggle at certain times a year. And Ian Balgowaan, he trawls for prawns oot a here. He fae Stoney bit he trawls fir prawns – cause the prawn grounds is nearer here. Then there's Wayne. *Far are the prawn grounds?* Eh, aff Montrose. Six mile aff Montrose doon ti six mile aff Arbroath. Bit it's an affa – well, it's okay. We're awa ti start that for a couple a month – supposed ti be the best month fir it here – s o jist ti gie the scallops a rest and hae a cheenge. And there's Wayne Barbour – he fishes the creels twelve month i the year an – *he gets a lot o velvet crabs* – Well, he disna get sae much velvets bit Kevin Birse and his father, Derek, they've got a boat and they catch a lot o velvets. They target them. Wayne disna actually target them. They're targetin the velvets.

Celia : They ging wi jist a little boatie?

Alan : Aye, Kevin's got a catamaran – 24 fit cataraman – it's a new boat like – a terrific boat and his father's got a 26 fit boat his-sel noo bit they target the velvets mair like cause there's nae been sae much labsters, he wis telling mi lest year. Fit abot that lad that bocht mi father's little boatie that used ti be caa'd the *Celia Craig*?

Alan : Charlie – he still pits in creels like- Charlie Lownie – and he sometimes pits in net for a bit o sea bass. That's something else that wis nevir heard o.

Celia : Ye nevir got sea bass – nuck. The kind o fish ye got in Gurden fin you were grouwin up and I wis grouwin up as well, Alan wis cod, haddock, whiting - *and*

*plaice* - and plaice and ye got flukes<sup>66</sup> and they were the best fish i the world. They were lovely. *Oh aye.*

Alan ; Bit there's nae fish here. I dinna ken how bit ....

Celia : Cause it hisna been overfished, his it?!

Alan : It his in a wye and it hisna. It wisna actually overfished aboot here bit as I say they canna come fae Auchenblae. Whither it his something to doh wi the weathir or no, we dinna ken.

Celia : Maybe they were overfished at one period? Was there nae a period o time fin the big boats were bringin in 30 – 40 boxes?

Alan : Ach, na – that wisna overfishin. I dah think so – nae fin we wis young. Well, Peter aye says ti me he heard this een. I cah mind – some o the auld lads fin he wis young. There wis an affa pohr year onywy, this auld retired lad – I cah mind fa he wis – Peter'll tell ye. He wis on the pier and somebody hid said the boats his done affa pohr i the noo. I doot they're aa taen (*i.e. all the fish*). The boy turned roond and said, "Ach, they've aa been taen since I wis a bairn". *Oh right, aye, mmhm.* Bit there's nothing oot here. Peter, I cah mind fa it wis – it wis some auld lad said "They've aa been taen since I wis a bairn". Bit there wis pohr years afore cause I mind yer father said ti me they hid ti ging ti the tatties (potato picking) The boys hid ti stop and ging ti the tatties. Ken there wis nae global warming in thae days.

Celia : It's aye been precarious.

Alan : There hiv aye been pohr times. Definitely bit it's this white fish thing aboot here. I canna – there's naebody kens. It's a mystery.

Celia : Is it fit the fish wid hae fed on? Is it maybe sand eels?

Alan : Aye, it's maybe that. That's the theory fir thae fleein crabs (velvet crabs). The codlins ett aa them fin they were saft. So that kept them doon. *Changes, changes.* There's aye been pohr times. It's this white fish thing oot here, as I say. Naebody kin understand it. The amount o fish that wis taen here – it's unbelievable. Gurden wis famous fir codlins. Line codlins. Even fin we wis at the trawls, wi catched codlins. They're nae here. Yet thae big boats is sayin they're finding mair codlins than they've din fir years bit they're certainly nae aboot here. Whether they'll come back or no. The really, really gallin thing aboot it is if they div come back, I'll hae nae richt ti catch them. Cause I've nae quota left. Cause I hid ti ging ti the scallops or we wis gaen ti be oot the door if we didna shift ti the scallops. The boat wid hid ti been sellt. Simple as that.

Celia : Did you hae a quota? Fit wis yer quota?

Alan : Aye. Noo yer askin. It wisna a lot. It wid be enough to live wi.

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<sup>66</sup> Flukes are flat fish - flounders

Celia : Certain days a month? *No – it wis jist certain amount o fish* Certain amount o fish.

Alan : Bit noo, if I ging back til it noo – wi nae been it it for that lang because there's nothing ti catch, I wid jist – I wid hae gotten a sma quota cause o the track record. They took me ower a three year period and I wis nevir at the trawl. So they come back wi nae richt ti catch them and Peter and Stephen – *Ye kid maybe contest that!* Na, I dah think so cause finevir they put a monetary value on fish, that wis it. I mean they rent fish. *Rent fish?* Rent fish. *I dinna understand that. Fit dis that mean?* Well, I'll tell ye. You dinna. I've offen thocht o this een. As far as they auld lads, they widna stootin for that. Fit it is, is, if a boat disna hae a big quota, and somedae hid a quota, they kid lowse their boat bit kept their quotas, so they buy fish or rent fish. Say they're needin twa hunder boxes this month o haddocks. That's £10 a box, that boy gets £2000 and he's transferred it ti him and he's got the richt ti catch this fish Nevir heard the like. Fit wid Bri-mmie and yer father and them hae said aboot that? *Incredible, isn't it.* No, fit di ye think tey wid hae said aboot that noo? I kin jist imagine Bri-mie <sup>67</sup> - *Fit wid he hiv said?* He wid hiv telt them ti ga wa and ...! They widna stood for that.

Celia : I didna ken - that's an incredible een, isn't it. It's jist a business.

Alan : .... allowed ti catch some bit nae enough as keep ye livin. And I went til it aa mi days, I mean Bit we hid ti ging ti the scallops or the boat wis gaen ti hae ti be sellt. it wis that pohr. Noo I've lost that bit I'm nae the only een that's lost it. I mean, there's a lot mair folk like me. I didna ging ti the scallops oot o choice –it wis necessity. And there's mair than me like that bit – and that's the worst thing aboot it. If it (*white fishing*) dis come back, we're nae gaen ti hae the richt ti catch them. <sup>68</sup>

Celia : It is pretty sad, Alan. It's pretty sad.

Alan : Aye sad – that's fit wi said afore – nae be allowed to land them on the pier at Gurden. Even though yer pittin them ontill a lorry at Gurden, disna matter – it's still landing them here. Cause I aye came here. I didna like Aiberdeen. I jist didna like it.

Celia : It's jist the destruction o the traditions.

Alan : It's jist comin in here – there's nothing like comn in here and throwin yer fish on a lorry and walkin hame, instead o gaen in ti Aiberdeen, sit in a car. *I ken.* It's jist me. I'm ower auld noo – winna cheenge noo. *Yer nae that auld, Alan.* Ah no – bit ye ken fit I mean. That's the gallin thing aboot it, Celia. It's jist went aa ti pot really

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<sup>67</sup> Bri-mmie – byname of James Ritchie, Gourdon Skipper of the same period as the interviewer's father who was Alan's first Skipper.

<sup>68</sup> Alan's clear explanation of this Catch-22 type situation highlights the sad demise of white fishing, with men forced out of trawling into scallop fishing, losing their quotas as a result, along with the "transference" of quotas, culminating in the loss of the right to catch white fish – if the fish ever return! In addition the right to a Gurden fish market has also been lost – Gurden is no longer a designated landing port and fish cannot even be landed and loaded on to a lorry for further transport from Gourdon. Men can no longer fish from home as it were – leave the house, go to sea, return, land their catch anad walk home. In effect and sadly, Gourdon/Gurden is no longer a working fishing village though it still has fish houses and a few boats work out of Gourdon and moor in the harbour. The traditions have been destroyed.

if ye sit doon and think about it. As I say, I think there'll aye be a livin o some description. Fit we'll be catchin I dinna ken bit aye something turns up.

Celia : Ah well, that might be a good point ti end on fin ye've said something optimistic.

Alan : Aye something turns up like. I think that. The scallops turned up and that's 13 year ago.

Celia : By the time you retire in anithir – fit ten, fifteen years – *Well, suppose so, if I lest that lang.* Ten, fifteen years, I wonder fit the future ... holds!

Alan : I hope there is because it's – it wid be affa day if there wsina a boat left in Gurden

Celia : It wid be sad, wouldn't it?

Alan : Ye see, I'm an affa een fir ... - if ye sit doon and think fit it wis like. It wis – Gurden wis jist a little placie bit aabody kent it.

Celia : I think it's happened ti aa the traditional industries and things - like it happened wi mining, it happened wi steel – *It his - mining* - It happened wi aa the big industries – farmin in a sense as well.

Alan : Far dis it end?! Andrew Mearns – he's a retired skipper fae Montrose – he said ti me – he stopped – aboot ten year, I suppose. He wisna 65. He sellt his boat. He'd haen enough. He said ti me, “It'll nae maitter onyweye, ye've had it” I says, “Foo's that, Andra?” He says – this wis his theory – “Somewye or anithir, even though it taaks anithir twenty years, there'll mebbe be some Scottish (It wis the white fish, he wis speakin aboot) – there'll mebbe be some Scottish white fish boats left bit there winna be much. The Continent'll own aa yer quotas and they'll own the richt ti yer fish. He always said that to me. I says, “Foo's that, Andra?” He says, “It's the great thing eftir the War – it wisna the EU – ti start aff wi – I could be wrang, I think it wis caa'd the European Steel and Coal company or something. It wis the Frogs and the Germans bit it wis jist ti stop anithir war cause they'd hin three gos, ye see. Ken, they'd the First War and the Seecnd War and the Franco-Prussian War, ye see. We'd nothing ti doh wi that. *That's right.* They'd hin three gos at een anithir. Some o thae lads thocht, Na, na, we're nae haen anithir go. Well, that's my theory

Celia ; Ye see ye've got this big power,... this axis.

Alan : Aye, he says, “The French'll hae aa the agriculture; the Germans'll hae aa the industry and the Spaniards'll hae aa the fish.” I says, “Fit'll we doh, Andra?”. He says, “I dinna ken.”

Celia : We're jist on the edge.

Alan : Fit'll we doh? Maak hamburgers - that's aboot aa. Aabody lauchs at me. That's aboot aa.



Celia : We'd Silicon Glen for a while far they maak aa the computer parts so ...

Alan : Bit that's fit Andra said. Whether he wis richt or no, I dinna ken. *Fa wis this?* Andra Mearns, retired skipper fae Montrose. *I've heard o him, I think.* Aye, he yohsed ti – he wis in the Amateur Dramatics at Montrose. Mind they yohsed ti doh a production ivery year. *Yes.* Well, he yohsed ti be in that. He sang. He wis a singer. He wis a Christina man, like. He wis an affa fine lad, like. Bit he wis a good singer, like. *That wis his theory ...* Bit actually he's nae grait noo. He's got ... Alzheimer's, he's got. *That's fit mi father hid.* I kain. He's got that and he wis like yer father. He wis a clevir kind o lad toh, like. He' gotten that. *It's very sad.* I hinna seen him for years. That wis Andra's theory .... Ye widna ken fit's afore wi, Celia, ti tell ye the truth bit it's definitely something wi that EU, like. I think they're tryin ti doh awa wi ...

Celia : We dinna seem ti hae a very strong voice in the EU – *We dinna hae a voice at aa.* The Fisheries minister – is it Ross.... Finnie or something like that. *Captain Manwaring* – That's a good description. *That's fit he got caa'd in the Fishing Community.* They dah seem ti be – dah seem ti hae enough clout.

Alan : Well, this is fit – I voted against the Scottish Parliament – mind fin there wis a referendum – I jist thocht it wid be a waist o time. *Did ye?* Yeh, I'm nae faird ti admit it. *I did vote for Devolution.* I didna bit we were beginning ti wonder, this is mebbe the best thing that happened fir the fishin side o things. Mebbe. I wid like ti think it because Alex Salmond's bound ti ken himsel if he dis nithin fir it, he's oot eh a job because he's fir up there somewye, isn't he or is he nae there noo? *It's Gordon, I think, he is noo.* Some wye up here. *It yohsed ti be Peter heid wye bit – Banff-Buchan.* He's nae that noo. *No, he's Gordon.* Well. I wis beginning ti – well hopin – this is the best thing ti happen – *Well, it nicht* – cause if he disna show'd, naebody will. And he's oot if he disna cause up there – if ye ging up ti Peterheid, ging ti the Broch (*Fraserburgh*), there's nae boats in the Broch, there's nothing. Bit as you said – did awa wi the mines, did awa wi the jute mills in Dundee – ken – ye used ti smell the jute fin ye yohsed ti ging ti the fitba.

Celia : It's aa ti doh wi world economy as well, isn't it – the prices that yer gaen ti pey yer workers and if ye can get really cheap labour – India, the far East – then they're gaen ti yohse that raither than ... I mean there wis something totally ridiculous – I'm nae shoor if it wis Tesco – were the prawns being sent ti Thailand or something ti be unshelled. *Aye, peeled and then teen back again.* *Aye, that's richt.* We were speakin aboot carbon footprints, Alan, I mean the air miles ti doh that are gaen ti add something ti hurt the environment.

Alan : Fit are we gaen ti doh aboot that and di ye think the Chinks and the Yanks is gaen ti doh onything aboot it. I dah think so.

Celia : Well. it's nae like it wi the Americans. No, it's nae really

Alan : It kid be aisy sorted and – *Ye reckon?!* - Aye, I kid sort it richt awa – nae bather. *How?* Switch that thing aff! *Laughter.* Na. na yer aa richt. Na, they cry aboot them yohsin a barrel o oil – they find mair oil aa the time. There's nae shortage

o oil oot there. *Right?* Five year ago fin they couldna sell it – ye couldna get a job in the oil – they’re given it ti folk noo – cause oil’s dear - they’ve suddenly found it again - ahhh! Ye ken, five year ago oil wis chaip. Ken this rigs up in Cromarty and aathing laid aff ... bit noo they tell me the rigs is screamin for folk cause the oil’s dear. I dah think they tell ye the half misel. See your car –right - naebody gets a bigger car than that – end o story. How much petrol are ye gaen ti save wi that? See folk runnin aboot in thon grait big jeeps – there’s nae need fir that. *No. that’s right.* Bit fa’s gaen ti – that’s half o it sorted already – ye get half the comsumption. Naebody gets a big 4 x 4, unless they can prove they need it for a farmer. *Yes.* Naebody gets a big larry unless they need it fir thir wor ; naebody gets a van unless they ned it fr thir work. *Right.* The biggest car’s 1.6 litres. Ye kin ging as fest as ye wint wi that. Foo much petrol are ye gaen ti save if aabody did that? Bit naebody kin doh it. That’s it jist abot solved, is it nae? *I suppose so bit wid ye nae need ti restrict aeroplanes as weel?* Eh? Aye, yip, ye wid bit foo shid ye penalise folk that kin finally afford ti ging abroad for a holiday that couldna afore? *That’s right. That’s the ithir argument.* Are ye gaen ti ging back ti the 1930s fin only the rich can afford ti ging abroad? I dah think that’s very fair.

Celia : No, I dah thinkthat wid be fair. That widna be fair.

Alan : I dah think that’s fair aithir bit that wis fit a lad wrote.

Celia : But I suppose the haill food chain thing – there could maybe be limitations on fit ye import and aathing by air so that there’s mair a seasonal approach ti food whether it’s vegetables or stock or cattle or fit hiv ye. There could be changes made - *Oh definitely* - bit it wid require an affa lot o co-operation and ....

Alan : Wid it doh ony herm onywy? They aye keep on aboot it, like. Global warming on a day like this. <sup>69</sup> It’s like November.

Celia : It’s been like that nearly aa June though. November. April was good. *Aye.* April was good. May was touch and go and June is winter. *Naebody kens.* Naebody kens.

Alan : I mind ae year, twa – three year ago – fin I spoke to Govie. It hid been northerly winds aa the summer. I ‘ll tell ye it wis jist eftir the langest day. We come back fae Arbroath wi pint and I says ti Govie, “This is terrible wi this northerly wind aa this time and aathing.” He says, “Ach, I’ve seen it aa afore.” I says, “Di ye think so, Govie – as bad as this”. “Oh aye, “ he said. He said, “They put an aerial up on the Hall for the Queen’s Coronation, 1953, June. the something? *I believe it was.* “It blew doon wi a northerly gale, so there ye go.” I says, “”Ah well, Govie, yer richt enough.” They’ve seen it aa afore. So he didna seem ti think it wis onything oot o the ordinary.

Celia : Although there are kinda warning signs fae Antartica, aren’t there, Alan? Icebergs – huge chunks o ice are braakin aff and

Alan : Mebbe happened afore and wi jist didna ken.

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<sup>69</sup> Unremitting rain was the weather on the chilly June day of the Interview!

Celia : Oh mebbe that's true.

Alan : See wi ken a hellafa lot noo that wi didna get tellt. Something happens – even fin we left the school – the wireless wis the main thing

Celia : Even the Falklands War – ye werena getting instant reportage. Mind you that might hae been intentional.

Alan : There's mebbe something happenin bit on the ithir side o the argument, some Norwegina lad – and this wis in the *Sunday Times* – I cut it oot but I gied it ti Robert Ceretti – and he wis on aboot some bit o the Arctic wis actually getting caulder and they shut him up. They nevir loot him speak. Some lad and he said it wis ti doh wi the sun and the moon. That's fit he said and I canna mind fit it wis caa'd, Celia. He's written a book aboot it and he says it's something ti doh wi the sun and the moon. He says, the world is getting hetter bit it's nae us that's dohin it. Somethng ti doh wi the sun and the moon. He reckoned that it happened afore, ye see. Mebbe it did bit aa folk wis carin aboot wis gettin enough ti eat ti live and work next day. In the 13 hunders, 12 hunders. This micht hae happened bit they didna ken. *They didna ken*. I'm nae sayin it's nae bit, I mean – I'm half empty, half fuhl, bit this lad, I cah mind his name – bit that's fit he said – ti doh wi the sun and the moon. His last thing says if we really think we can middle – he mair or less said - wi the Universe by cutting petrol emissions, I think we're a bittie deluded wi oor ain power.

Celia : That's consolin in a wye because the Universe is gigantic

Alan : Professor somebody – cah mind his name - that's fit he said. I thoct, well, the boy's mebbe richt. If ye look up there and think are we really gaen ti manage ti doh this wi cuttin doon car emissions.

Celia : Bit still, they are speakin aboot a hole in the ozone layer.

Alan : There's nae much said aboot that noo though. It's fillin up again, lest I heard.  
*Laughter.*

Celia : I'm gaen ti stop there.

**End of Tape 2, Side A, Side 3 of the whole**

## **Summary : headings**

### **Tape 1, Side 1**

- **Childhood spent at the harbour, a focal point, picking up the skills of rope tying (a round turn and two half hitches) and helping land the catch of different boats**
- **Early and continued fascination and complete absorption with all aspects – fishing, boats - from primary school days onwards – happy times**
- **Family tradition/connection with fishing – father, grandfather, originally from farming stock, granny from Crawton**
- **Involvement of grandmother and mother in sheeling and baiting lines**
- **Early fishing trips with father to the lines and the seine net on the two different boats of his father's berths.**

- **Comparison of fishing now potentially all year round and the seasonal fishing of Alan's youth. Creels can be fished now all year but in the 1950s/60s and perhaps beyond crab fishing ran from Easter to September – to rest the partans. Thereafter boats went to the lines. Fishing was practised in accord with the seasons but also to a lesser extent to rest the women folk who had a hard winter sheeling and baiting the lines. In the summer seine net fishing and creel fishing allowed this rest period for them.**
- **Memory of being sick and being teased by the crew**
- **Growing awareness of the different types of fishing. No favourites at this stage – instead liking them all**
- **Happy memories of primary school with old style headmaster, succeeded by young, modern Head teacher. Passing exam to go to Senior Secondary School. Secondary school days less happy – fascination with the sea continues – staying off school to go to sea, to the creels, crab fishing in small boat shared by himself and his brother, called the *Lisa May* after the baby of the family. Missing the school bus**
- **Catching first lobster on Cup Final Day – an Aberdeen win**
- **Alan unique among the lads of his generation in keen-ness to go to the sea. Others liked it but did not make fishing their living though often ended in jobs with some peripheral connection with the sea.**
- **A retrospective wish to have joined the Merchant Navy for a period on leaving the school at fifteen**
- **Alan's first berth in 1970/71 – with the Interviewer's father, Alex Craig, Skipper of the *Trustful ME 132*. Details of securing that berth – the respect then accorded to Skippers – memories of their wartime service – Alan touched remembering my father's sentiment expressed in the song phrase, "Ye'll be as welcome as the flowers in May" when asked for a berth – going to the creels in the summer, the lines in the winter. Very congenial berth – good relationship.**
- **In 1973, Alan decided to join with fish merchant, Douglas Welsh to buy a boat of his own to skipper himself. Concerns about leaving his berth with the *Trustful* after two years. Steering up the lines and reading the compass on his first berth would stand him in good stead.**
- **Purchase of the *Liberty* from Johnshaven for £450, with Alan contributing from his savings £100 – an opportunity not to be missed. First pay with *Trustful* had been £18, 18 shillings, half deal, for his half line, good money in those days. (Footnote explains the Share fishing system). Comparison with an apprentice friend's pay of £5. Various cautionary comments about buying a boat with someone not going to sea with it.**

- Creel fishing with the *Liberty* and crew member – setting up creels – applying for a grant for creels, an unusual move in Gurden, not taken advantage of by most Skippers. Comparison with the government Grant and Loan scheme for boat building after World War II and the sole recipient of this Grant – a parallel with Alan’s own time.
- Number of creels worked on *Trustful* – 125 with two men, nowadays some 600 would be more commonly worked. The unique *Trustful* system of working fleets of 25 creels, instead of the usual 20 – five fleets of 25 to 6 fleets of 20. The similarly unique *Trustful* variation of line fishing, using 900 hooks instead of the standard 1200 described, and justified by the greater extent of fishing ground covered for codlins – also less work for the womenfolk.
- Training received on his first berth

#### End of Side 1, starting Side 2

- Starting on his own with his “new” boat, line fishing, with one crew member, then by himself and then again with crew member – at first lines in the winter, creels in the summer but then turning to trawling with the difficulties of getting lines baited – line fishing tailing off at this time – the late 1970s
- Acquired trawl boat from North Berwick – first year struggles - gets married 1979 – next boat more modern, same engine power, 1980 – after another year, starting to do well
- Trawled at the Shald Water in winter but come summer trawled inshore for codlins, an irregular activity!
- The boat was a forty-five footer, with the addition of another 60hp installed by Alan which made a big difference
- Alan among the first to trawl at Gurden – again picking up procedures from having been out with boats already trying trawling
- Differences between trawl and seine net – claymore to rapier – details given on procedures, nature of the ground, hard or soft, use of rock hoppers
- Differences between single and pair trawling which has a lot to answer for in demise of the fish – Alan pair trawled for only a few weeks
- Loss of his boat after becoming “wound up” at the codlins – details of the mishap, the terrible weather conditions, being towed in, being assisted by another Gourdon boat, being put ashore as the boat failed to respond – encouraged not to give up by an older fisherman – buying another boat

from Fraserburgh, the *Hazel*, 55 foot, in January 1985 – first year again a struggle – then doing well enough

- Next partner, Welsh proposes getting boat built – 1987, launched 1988, utilising the available grant – called the *Emma Kathleen* after Alan’s two daughters – seine netting – choosing the registration number, finally *ME 87* after the year she was built. Alan had 27 shares, Welsh, 64
- Trawling with a crew of four, doing well, reducing crew to 3 later when things got tight
- Equipment – knowing what to purchase - seeing the equipment in operation on another boat – differences in the radar available – charts replaced by video and computer-style “charts”
- Later sophisticated equipment in the form of CD discs replace the earlier video devices – the compass still in use but GDS/ sat nav now used for plotting courses
- The importance of experience in all of this, including where to fish – example of Gourdon/Montrose fishing – recording this on disc in the same way that wrecks are already on record
- Comparison with the simple equipment available when Alan started with my father – only compass and watch available, not even a sounder – tide tables used – Smith’s watch popular among the Gourdon fishermen – Alan recalls the day when my father bought his Smith’s watch, costing about £2!
- Keeping up with the latest devices – currently a device to map the bottom of the sea in 3D on a flat screen – or being left behind but as catches go up assisted by the new devices, the fishing industry declines from over-fishing
- Description of the move towards scallop fishing, previously unknown to Gourdon fishermen – influence of Manxmen and West Coast fishermen – Stonehaven boats starting – requirements of scallop fishing and customising the boat by cutting away parts/the shelter to accommodate the scallop dredges – Alan not keen because boat still new
- Alan outlines the choices to his crew – prawn fishing off the West Coast or converting the boat for scallops – consulting crew but following his own course in the final instance as Skipper – not keen to be based away from home on the West Coast – decision taken to scallop fish
- Description of scallop dredge, the swords, the dredging process, the scallop containers/”chain bellies” – the stones picked up along with the scallops

- Having seen the dredges towed once at Arbroath, Alan had to go ahead on his own – 1994 – doing well
- Now other techniques have been picked up that could have improved even that success – e.g how to minimise the quantity of stones picked up with the catch
- Typical catch for a two hour tow – 4 - 6 baskets – currently something of a falling off in scallop catches
- Alan is the only local boat at scallops here but there are “strangers” , using more than double the number of dredges that Alan uses – leading to over-fishing – the new boats are like machines and whereas formerly at the scallops poor weather would keep the boats in port, now the “strangers” fish all weathers – apart from Scots Skippers their crews tend to be Eastern European – Polish or Lithuanian men typically
- Scallops sold to a Peterhead firm, *Seafood Ecosse* at £10 a kilo, okay but not a specially good price
- Expenses – diesel and scallop gear maintenance
- A typical day at the Scallops described – maybe 36 hours from 5 o’ clock in the morning finding a fruitful area – number of tows of the dredges, 12 or 14 at 2 hours per tow – the need to rest a discovered valuable patch and not over-fish it.
- Landing the scallops at Gourdon – on to a lorry for transportation to Aberdeen and Peterhead
- In an aside Alan addresses the potential demise of Aberdeen Fish Market – Welsh using Shetland and the ferry instead
- The demise of the fishing industry – no white fish remain inshore around Gourdon – perhaps the climate, perhaps overfishing – pair trawling – sea warming. Fish are present off the Yorkshire coast, so why not up here? If it’s sea warming it should affect both areas. Gulf Stream – carbon footprint – various possibilities

End of Tape 1, Side 2

Tape 2, Side A/Side 3 of the whole.

- Government and EU restrictions to protect fish stocks – hard on white fishing – days at sea – big boats tell of more fish than ever before further north and east but still none around Gourdon area or at the former favourite fishing grounds such as the Shald Water



- **Problem of waste – how to deal with this. Cod being dumped when in excess of quota because not legally entitled to land it even for fish meal manufacture as was done in the past.**
- **Regulations are necessary but the associated problems are worrying.**
- **Scallop fishing regulations – number of teeth per dredge and size of each dredge, with imminent new regulation on number of permitted dredges**
- **Boats using 14 dredges restricted to fishing outside of 12 miles ; those using more than 8 dredges – 6 miles. Alan’s boat only one using fewer than 8 dredges**
- **Possibility of fishing cycles when one particular method is in vogue and profitable, followed by lean periods and other methods coming to the fore**
- **Creels beginning to enjoy a comeback round the Scottish coast –in the 80s even working 300 creels ( as done by Jimmy Brown, now Stonehaven Harbour Master) was not viable for making a living**
- **Reasons for the comeback – West Coast Markets geared up for instant transport by truck direct to Spain – type of crab now caught and marketed – the Velvet Crab, locally termed Fleein Crabs – would not have been considered an appropriate catch in the time of the Interviewer’s father, of Alan’s first berth – would have been discarded. These crabs are now available whereas ten years ago they were absent from the area – a hopeful sign in some ways**
- **Gourdon fishermen’s theory on these soft Velvet Crabs – eaten by the codlins in the past but now that the codlins have gone, the Velvets can flourish**
- **Details of the transportation to Spain – e.g. via Portsmouth – through France**
- **Another problem concerns the lack of young lads entering fishing, their places occupied by Polish and Lithuanian men – the hard work aboard the big boats, 6 / 7 days out at sea**
- **Alan’s crew, however, made up of local lads, one from Gourdon, one from Montrose, the Gourdon lad from a traditional Gurden fishing family<sup>70</sup>**
- **Alan’s favourite type of fishing – likes the scallops – would like to return to trawling if a living could be made at it. A fellow Gourdon fisherman took the other route of prawn fishing all year, North Shields all winter and the West Coast all summer**

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<sup>70</sup> Alan’s Gourdon crew member is Ross MacKenzie, grandson of my father’s old “rival” Skipper

- **Sadly Gourdon is no longer a designated landing port – used to be a landing port, with its own fish markets – undesignated 4 or 5 years ago in spite of attempts by Gourdon fishermen and Skippers to keep its status by meeting with local MP, Robert Smith and an EU representative who came down the pier at Gourdon and promised to do what they could – in vain! Shellfish may be landed – scallops, prawns, crabs, lobsters but not white fish. Similarly Arbroath is also no longer a designated landing port. Landing ports now are Abedeem, Peterhead or Shields. Once lost never to be retrieved in Alan’s view**
- **Another Tesco type analogy – big supermarkets to small village shops = 10 big scallopers to 40 smaller boats, with Scots crews of three men, keeping 20 families going**
- **Previous difficulties and problems such as the Klondykers acknowledged but things are getting worse now. However, in general Alan feels there will always be a living to be made in fishing of some kind for some folk**
- **Review of the current situation in Gourdon – about three boats prawn fishing all year round, one Skipper from Stonehaven, fishing out of Gourdon because the prawn grounds are closer to Gourdon than Stonehaven – the grounds are 6 miles off Montrose – one traditional creel boat and one velvet crabber, using a new 24 foot catamaran and one wee boat going to the creels and net for sea bass <sup>71</sup>**
- **Reflection on the type of fish caught in the Interviewer’s youth – cod, haddock, whiting, plaice and flukes (flounders/flat fish) – never sea bass**
- **Gourdon fishing grounds not over-fished - certain poor years always existed – tale of old fisherman who maintained that fish had often been scarce : “They’ve aa been taen since I wis a bairn”**
- **The lack of sand eels and the velvet crab/codlin theories revisited**
- **Gourdon used to be famous for codlin – line codlin, even trawl codlin - but ironically if the cod did come back they could not be landed at Gourdon!**
- **Quotas – by scallop fishing which he had to do to make a living, Alan would have little status for a quota or only a very small quota to catch a certain amount of fish**
- **Renting fish explained – transferring quotas – something the older fishermen/Skippers would not have stood for**
- **The situation has led to the demise of fishing ports like Gourdon – lack of white fish – low quotas – deprivation of status as designated landing port**

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<sup>71</sup> This last (the *Celia Craig*) is the boat bought by the Interviewer’s father when he retired and later sold.

- no fish market at home port – forced out of trawling into scallop fishing
- where men can no longer fish from home – the traditions have been destroyed
- Alan believes that there will always be fishing of some sort practised at Gurden- as happened with scallops – it would be a terrible day if there “wisna a boat left in Gurden”
- Parallel with the demise of other traditional Scottish industries – mining, steel
- Theory of Andrew Mearns, Montrose Skipper – that Europe will eventually own all the fishing rights, apart from maybe a few Scottish whitefish boats – as a post World War II prevention measure to keep the French and Germans from another war. “The French’ll hae aa the agriculture; the Germans’ll hae aa the industry and Spaniards’ll hae aa the fish”
- Scottish Fisheries Minister – Scottish Parliament – lack of strong Scottish voice/clout – hopes for the Alec Salmond government – world economy – cheap labour – prawns sent to Thailand to be peeled and returned!
- Carbon footprint problems – Alan’s solution – restricting all cars to 1.6 litres and no big vehicles permitted unless required for work - problem of restricting air travel, penalising families who can now afford to take holidays abroad. Restriction of food imports – seasonal food
- Global warming ? ! Summer like November. Tale of older fisherman, Skipper Govie Cargill who has seen it all before, for example when the aerial put up for the Queen’s Coronation blew down in a northerly gale. Reference to another theory that the warming has little to do with man and has happened in the past. Cutting carbon emissions will be useless
- Ozone layer now filling up?

**End of Tape A, Side 3**

