

AN INTERVIEW WITH MRS MAGGIE ANDERSON

On the 6th of July two trainees from the Balloch Trust working on behalf of Buckie District Fishing Heritage Society called on Mrs Anderson to ask if she would mind answering some questions about her life after she left school. The transcript was checked over and put on to a floppy disc by Allan Fraser on 1st May 2003.

“ Could you tell me what age you were when you left school ”

“I wis fourteen.”

“What did you do then?”

“ I went as a domestic to begin with an then when I wis seventeen I went tae the fishin in Lerwick.”

“ How did you get there, to Lerwick?”

“ Crossin in a boat fae Aiberdeen.”

“Wis there a lot of you left this area at that time?”

“ Oh there wis.”

“What was the conditions like on the boat gaun there?”

“ Well I hid naethin tae ate. I wis niver doon ablow. I bade up on deck cos I wis sea-sick and mair than gled tae see Lerwick.”

“Hoo lang did it tak ye roughly?”

“ I cwidna exactly tell ye but there wis this pairt o the sea that ye hid tae cross in they aye said it wis affy rough. I jist canna mine the name o’t. It wis a rough time there. We naut a few days tae come tae oorsels. “

“ Did they allow ye time for that?”

“Yes, oh aye. We bade in huts.”

“ How many were there in each hut?”

“ Three tae six. There wis jist three in the one that I wis in but there wis usually six, ‘n we did oor ain cookin.”

“ Fit did ye dee there, did ye a’ tak turns it cookin?”

“ Aye, we took days, my day’s today, your day’s the morn.”

“ Hid ye special places for cookin?”

“No, no, coal fires. They supplied the coal.”

“ When did yer day start?”

“Ye hid tae be up jist efter five tae start work at six. . We got a break at breakfast time then back at it again. I’ve seen us still workin at 12 in the evenin an ye niver stopped for rain.”

“ Hid ye nae protection ? Wir ye ootside a the time?”

“ Oot-side a the time, wi nae protection!”

“Fit aboot clothin?”

“ Ileskins, aye, they supplied ye wi yer ileskins. “

“N welly-beets?”

“ Aye bit ye hid tae pey for them in the end.”

“ Hid ye ony protection on yer hands?”

“Aye, fit we caad cloots. “

“Roon the fingers?”

“ Pit on yer clooties the fisher wifies ence tae say, pit on yer clooties. Funny enough I wis a packer, then there wis oor gutters. The fisher loons enct tae come up at the week-ends tae get their tae. “

“ A’ the boys fae hame?”

“ Aye. The place we wir at - the fishcurer we were wi wis Dawson - wis oot at Scotland Point, in ye cwidna gang nae farrer. It wis a hite awa fae the toon o Lerwick, a good hite. Ye hid tae cross fir they caad Stoney Hill. There wis a shop there that supplied oor stores. We eest tae hae a note-book an ivery time ye went tae the shop ye wrote it doon and fin we got oor pey on Mondays ye jist eest tae go tae the shop. Ye didna work on a Monday. We eest tae pit on oor hat an go tae the shop and pey oor messages in go intae the toon.”

“ Did ye work on Saturdays?”

“ No we wirn’t allowed Sunday work.” (I think this should have been Saturday.)

“ Did ye work on Sunday?”

“ No.”

“Fit wid ye dae on a Sunday up there?”

“ Maist o them eest tae go back intae Lerwick far they’d a’ gang tae the kirk but we niver did, we wantit a rest.”

“What about entertainment, had ye nae dances?”

“There wis that few that went tae Lerwick tae the dance bit we didna go, we jist eest tae mak oor ain entertainment.”

“Fit did ye actually dee, did ye sing sangs?”

“The loons eest tae sing. The fisher loons eest tae come. We jist eest tae get a lach, nithin bad about it, ye ken.”

“Fan did ye gang tae Lerwick and fan did ye come back?”

“We went about May and came back in July or August, then we were idle fae then till we went tae Yarmouth, October, November time..”

“Ye went tae Yarmouth then, fit like wis it there?”

“We hid digs in Yarmouth, certain hooses supplied digs for the fisher women – women’s digs.”

“Ye wid hiv haen a bittie mair comfort there?”

“A wee bittie mair comfort, bit workin conditions wis worse.”

“Fit wye like?”

Oot-side work in the winter-time, snaw, I dinna ken hoo some o’ them survived. I think that’s fit’s tellin on a lot o fowk noo.”

“What were the wages like?”

“Well, they went wi the work that ye did. It wis piece work. Ye got three pennies for iverly barrel you finished off. Ye packed them ae day ‘n gaed up the followin mornin tae fill them up, ye ken. Ye ken the saut, they wir so iced in, the roch saut that wis used ye wir greetin, especially in Yarmouth. It wis awfa conditions, ye ken.”

“Despite that ye obviously seemed tae be happy in this kind o work.”

“Oh aye, very happy. We ence tae ging in laries tae oor work in Yarmouth singin in iverlything, oor sleeves up tae here, (demonstrating) in yer fingers a tied ‘n rain ‘n snaw. “

“Hoo lang did it tak ye tae dee a barrel?”

“It wis up tae the person thimsels. There wis a nack in dee’nt. Onybidy cwidna pack them, ye hid tae learn.”

“Did ye dee this lang? How mony years did ye dee that?”

“I wis marriet fin I wis 21.”

“Twenty-one, so ye did it up till then?”

“Aye fae I wis seventeen.”

“Did you meet you husband through the fishing?”

“Yes. He wis fae Findochty.”

“Finechty?”

“Anderson, Castle Street. D’ ye ken Jessie Cowie, Zena Cowie, Zena that works in Cruickshank’s. her man an my man wis breethers.”

“What did ye keep yer claes in fin ye wis awa fae hame at Lerwick an Yarmouth?”

“We eest tae hae a widden trunk, a kist. We hid a locker in’t, we kept oor purse, oor note-paper in so forth, then a’ oor claes went intae this trunk, oor towels, sheets in a’ this.

What did you do about bedding?

“We eest tae ging up tae Mill o’ Buckie wi a hard sack for caff for oor bed. We wid fill the sack wi caff.”

“Fit wis this caff again?”

“I think it wis jist the remains o the corn efter it hid been thrashed. This wis pit in the bag and syne wee eest tae shoo it up an put on a cover. This wis oor bed.”

“It cwidna been very comfortable?”

“No it wisna, fu’ o’ lumps.”

“Did ye kert a this we ye on the boat?”

“The fishin boats eest tae be awfa helpful, they wid hiv took that sorta things, bit oor trunks hid tae ging by train, we us, then shipped on tae the boat. Iverybody tried tae hae the bonniest een(trunk). We eest tae cover the top wi’ table baise. They eest tae hae tae use them for seats, tables in a’ that.”

“Hid ye ony washin facilities in yer hut?”

“No, ye hid tae cairy yer water.”

“For a bath in a’?”

“We eest tae hae up a curtain, ‘n caad it the glory hole. Ye eest tae ging in there ‘n wash. A’ oor sheets went in tae this trunk, dishes, ye took this ‘n that, yer neebor took somethin else. Ye jist hid tae work it among ye.”

“Hoo much o’ ye wis there?”

“Three in a crew, two gutters ‘n a packer.”

"Wis there an awfa lot o' folk fae here wi' ye at the time?"

"There wis a lot went fae Buckie jist tae get the money, it wisna very much which ye got afore ye left, which they caad yer arles. I niver yet understood fit that meant. A few pounds, ye thocht it wis a lot. In those days it wis a lot."

"What did your food consist of?"

"Jist auld fashioned mait, tatties and mince, neeps 'n tatties, 'n broth 'n that sorta thing. 'N the fishermen enct tae tak ye doon for yer denners on Sunday, tae the boats. The boats that wir lying in the quays, far we wir workin, 'n they wid ask ye doon for yer denner on Sunday, which wis a luxury, a treat."

"I suppose it wis fine seein boys fae hame."

"Aye, 'n we eest tae tak wallpaper we's, oor ain paper, chape wallpaper 'n we wid hiv papered oor hut. We wir very, very happy, that's fit maks me so – I don't know about the bairns nooadays, there's nae satisfaction. We were very happy. Some cam hame wi' a lot o' money, some didn't get the same. Fit am ca'n a lot of money wid've been aboot £15. That wis a lot o' money, a lot o' money."

"For a' that time up there?"

"Aye. That wis a lot o' money tae us."

"Did you always get home for Christmas?"

"Yes, aye ye wis always home for that, then that wis you idle again, roon tae May, 'n ye didna get unemployment benefit, ye wis classed as seasonal workers."

"So ye got nithin at a'."

"No ye hid tae go'n get a job, domestic or somethin."

"Fit happened say if onybidy hid a cut or accident, wis there first – aid or onything like o' that?"

"Yes, there wis fit they called a rest. Nurse Rae, who was very respected by the fisher folk, a good woman, she eest to attend to you."

"Did this cost ye anything?"

"No, no, I suppose stamps covered that. Then my father, as I say, my father hid a boat, 'n we hid a laft o' nets. I wis brocht up in Cathcart Street, 'n we hid a laft o' nets, which required mendin, 'n eest tae employ wimen tae come in and mend, well we hid tae help."

"Even when ye were at school?"

"No, oh no, when we left school."

"Fit boat did yer father hae?"

"The Ardlaw."

"Di ye remember the number?"

"Aye, forty four."

"BCK44?"

"No BF44."

"That wid've been afore 1907."

"Aye, BF44."

"Hid he ony ither boat?"

"He got the 'Progress', which changed it's name tae the 'Apple-tree', 'n he hid nae it lang. Fit wis the wurd ye'd use?"

"Wis it requisitioned for the war?"

"Yes, well that wis the fishin days finished as regards ma father."

"That wis the sea?"

"That wis him feenished wi the sea."

"'N yer man he went tae the sea a' his life?"

"My husband went tae the sea in he actually feenished up wi' a boat o' oor ain."

"Fit boat wis that?"

"The 'Clara'"

"Di ye mine her number?"

"No, 85, I think. They fished doon it Shields, in that waters."