

Transcript of Frida Morrison interview with James George Addison of Cullen, Moray

Frieda Morrison: James George Addison loves the sea. He was born in 1929 and spent most of his working life as a fisherman fishing all around the coast. And from his house in Cullen overlooking the bay, he told me more about his working life on the boats.

James George Addison: I left the school at fourteen and my first job was at the sawmill at Tochineal peeling pit props. I was dying to get away to sea. Then I got away in my father's Sienner 'The Procure' as cook at fourteen, cooking for five lads. And we worked out of Cullen and landed at Portnockie quite a lot. That time was mostly forty footers, sea knitters, small forty foot with [a] five oar crew. If the drifters had all been commandeered by the Admiralty the ones that were left, and they were away so it was mostly forty footers. We fished out of Aberdeen, Lybster, Wick and the first [place] we went was Campbeltown and Campbeltown was my favourite.

Frieda Morrison: So what fish were your fishing for at that time?

James George Addison: White fish, ken, haddocks, any white fish. I went to the herring after that when I left that boat 'The Procure' I went in a steam drifter called 'The Deveron Side' as fireman. Now fireman was quite a different job from cooking.

Frieda Morrison: Now you didn't have fancy gadgets on the boats when you first started so how did you know how far down the bottom was, how deep the water was?

James George Addison: Oh well when I first started on that Procure we'd to use what they call the lead line to see if there was sand at the bottom or rock. And there was a hole in the bottom of the lead that you filled [with] grease and the lead line was marked in fathoms so you dropped the lead. And if it was sand when you picked up the lead and saw the sand at the bottom you kent it was soft. If it was clean it was rock.

Frieda Morrison: So you wouldn't fish there, you wouldn't fish on the rock...

James George Addison: [laughing] No, you wouldn't fish on the rock. You'd have fished on the sand. When I came back from the war my father already [hurt] his back and they got a boat built at Aravan's in Peterhead, 'The Cairngorm'. That was fishing for white fish. Then we fished from Shetland around to [the] east coast of Scotland, west coast and I was there until 1958 when me and my brother-in-law got a 70-foot Sienner built at Jones' in Buckie and she was called 'The Valiant' and was registered in Aberdeen. Her number was A466. And I was there, we were partners until about 1980 and went away back to the herring, to the Purse Sienners on 'The Coronella'.

Frieda Morrison: And your wife was involved as well wasn't she?

James George Addison: Aye she was a gutting quine in the 50s. Herring at that time, the quines did a harder job than the men did. We just went to the sea [to] catch the herring. Oh I admire the quines that went to the fishing because they were a hard lot and did a great job and a hard job.

Frieda Morrison: Like all fishermen you will have had your share of sadness as well...

James George Addison: Oh yeah, sadly sadly. I've seen, and believe me it's the worst thing to experience and to see. To see a pal or one of your crew over [the] side. On a day like this just now Frieda, flat calm not a breath of wind and he fell over [the] side at a crucial crucial time when the net was just going away. Sadly he was lost. And as I say the cook from Findochty jumped over the side to try and get hold of him and just as he got to him, he was down, he went down. Never forget that and I'm now ninety years old and count myself so lucky when you see youngsters taken away at that age. Unbelievable.

Frieda Morrison: Do you miss the sea?

James George Addison: Oh aye without a doubt. My only chance to go to see now is in a ferry and I like a trip when there's a ferry involved!

Oh I would never like to be away from the sea. Every morning I see the sea in all its moods. I can see it on a bonnie day and I can see it in a hoolie. I would never like to be away from the sea.