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INTERVIEW WITH - MR. BILL MILNE.

11C BLANTYRE TERRACE, BUCKIE.

Interview with Mr. Bill Milne, 11C Blantyre Terrace,
Buckie, on 14-6-88.

Q. When you left the school, you went to the kippering. How long were you at the kippering for?

A. Well, it was a seasonal kind of job at that time.

Q. What was your wages?

A. I think it was sixpence an hour.

Q. How many hours a day did you work?

A. Six in the morning tae six at night.

Q. After the kippering, ye went away tae sea. Can you min' the name o' yer boat?

A. The Poseiden BCK 157

Q. Was it a steel or a wooden boat?

A. A steel boat.

Q. What was your job in it?

A. A year or two year as cook, and the rest fireman.

Q. Who taught ye how to cook?

A. Well, I eesed tae see a bit o' it at home.

Q. What kind of things did ye cook?

A. Jist soups, fry-ups. amd a' that sort o' thing, and biscuits in between.

Q. Can you bake as well?

A. Yes.

Q. What like were the galley conditions when you were cooking?

A. Not good. Confined to a small space.

Q. How did you get your stores?

A. Ye bought them weekly. Ye sorta knew what ye were going through in a week, and ye followed that up.

Q. The boat ye were on wiz a steel boat, did you use coal?

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A. Yes.

Q. When you became fireman ye wid hae used the coal?

A. Yes.

Q. When you became fireman, did you learn yersel or were you shown how to do it?

A. My father wiz engineer before me and the cook's up above and the engineers down below, so ye pick up a lot through watching ithers, and then of course, my father kept me right.

Q. How much coal did you use a day?

A. Well, depended on where ye were going.

Q. When ye were away on long trips, how long did you go away?

A. It was a daily thing, the herring fishing.

Q. Did ye ever go away from home at all?

A. Oh, aye. Ye went tae the herring fishing in Lerwick and the West Coast.

Q. When ye were away long trips, how long were ye away for, fin ye went tae Yarmouth and Lerwick?

A. 6 to 8 weeks.

Q. Hid ye ony time off?

A. At the weekend.

Q. What did you do at the weekends?

A. Go ashore. Pictures, things like that. Bit ye werena' lang ashore. The only time ye hid off wiz Saturday after tea, and Sunday, all day, maybe anyone would stand in for you.

Q. Did you go to Church on a Sunday?

A. Aye. Twice on a Sunday. That was where the Community Centre now stands. The West Church.

Q. Who was the Minister then?

A. Martin.

Q. When you were a fireman, on your Sunday off, did you have to go back to the boat to get steam up on the boat?

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A. Well, some o' the lads wid keep the fire going, jist keep life in the fire, so ye didna have tae go back for that. Some o' yer pals wid throw on a shuffle or two of coal to keep it going.

Q. Did ye have any ither duties ither than fireman?

A. The fireman hid tae haul the nets as well.

Q. Ye mair or less hid tae dae everything on the boat did ye?

A. Everything bar take charge.

Q. Did y ou tar the ropes on the boats.

A. No, they were taken ashore for that purpose.

Q. Who tarred them?

A. The crew. The crew that wiz going tae the fishing. See whaur that building is, jist at the back o' Hamilton's? There wiz a place in there for that type o' thing, and they eessed tae bark nets and tar ropes in there. The crew did that job.

Q. That wiz like in between times?

A. Aye.

Q. How often were they tarred a year?

A. Once a year.

Q. How long were ye away from home for?

A. 8-10 weeks sometimes.

Q. What was your pay?

A. I think it wiz 25 and then it rose tae 30 bob a week.

Q. How did ye manage on that?

A. Ye jist hid tae manage.

Q. I suppose ye thocht that wiz a lot o' money then?

A. Go ashore, ye got a five bob tae yersel. The rest my mither got and I suppose she saved a bit off o' that for me like.

Q. How long did ye work when ye were on the boat?

A. Worked tae ye stopped, nae set times.

Q. Did ye get any sleep?

A. Oh aye, ye hid sleep when ye cuild get it. Ye maybe worked 16 to 18 hours a day.

Q. Wiz there any first aid on the boats?

A. To a certain degree, yes.

Q. What was your first aid?

A. A few bandages and so on and so forth. Anybody who could do it, does it.

Q. Any injuries on your boat?

A. Well, not in my time, bit they do happen sometimes.

Q. Did you maintain the engines?

A. Well, again, to a certain degree. Between fishings, that wiz done by the engineer. Sometimes, the fireman, if things were tight, if they could do with one, niver mind the other man tae gie him a hand.

Q. What were the lifeboats like?

A. Well, I suppose, if oit hid come tae a push, it wid hae been a'richt. It wiz very seldom they were loosened off and pit in the watter, unless it wiz a dire need, then they wid launch them.

Q. Were ye iver out in bad weather?

A. Oh, mighty aye.

Q. Fit did ye dae in bad weather?

A. Same as ye did in good weather.

Q. Did ye fish a' the time in bad weather?

A. Well. if it became too bad, ye hid tae mak for port.

Q. How did ye get yer forecasts?

A. Well, at that time we did have a wireless on the boat. I think when things started in the broadcasting line they did broadcast a service for the fishermen.

Q. Did ye iver forecast yer ane wither?

A. Och, aye.

Q. How did ye forecast the weather?

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A. Well, sky and a' the rest o' it.

Q. What kind o' superstitions were there?

A. Like meeting padres and a' this type o' thing. They didna like meeting a minister.

Q. Do they still think that way yet?

A. Aye. An' never mention pigs.

Q. How did ye get yer lights on the boat?

A. Oh, paraffin at that time.

Q. What did you keep your paraffin in?

A. Containers.

Q. How many gallon wid the containers have held?

A. Five gallon drums, there wiz a paraffin tankon board and ye kept that filled, ye worked oot o' that.

Q. Did ye iver run oot o' paraffin?

A. Oh no.

Q. Had ye ony characters in the crew?

A. Oh well, I dinna ken really, I cuildna answer that ane.

Q. Where did ye meet yer wife?

A. I met her in the school.

Q. You were born in Brora, did you come doon here?

A. Aye, I must hae been maybe 4 or 5 when I came from Brora. WIFE. There wisna nae High School fin I gied tae Buckie. I started at Portessie, and there were only three classes and then ye hid tae go tae Buckie and I went through a feew classes and I wiz pit doon tae the Fisherman's Hall, we hid a class doon there, and my friend stayed in Gordon Street, and he used tae bugger aboot, a message boy in Mackays, and he used tae look in and Miss Forbes, frae Banff, wiz the teacher, said "Never mind, it's only Willie Milne" We went the gither a lang time, I niver hid nae ither lad, he niver gied wi' naebody else either.

Q. When you were first married, were you still a fisherman?

A. Yes.

Q. When did you go on to being a diver?

A. 1938.

Q. Why did you leave the fishing to go to the diving?

A. Cuil'dna get a job, and I got the chance o' this ane. Her sisters' man, he wiz a diver an a', so I started wi' him as linesman and then took it from there.

Q. What did you dive for?

A. Repairs, harbour repairs.

Q. How long were you under the water for?

A. An hour at the most, maybe.

Q. Wiz that wi' the heavy suit and glass thing?

A. Yes.

Q. Hiv ye still got that suit? Ye hinna still got yer helmet hiv ye?

A. Oh no.

Q. Where did ye dive?

A. Harbour works. Invergordon once or twice.

Q. When you were a diver, how much did you earn, were you paid by the week or the month?

A. Half-a-croon the hoor.

Q. How many hours a day did you work?

A. 8 hours.

Q. Was it jist diving, repairing the harbour? What kind o' things went wrong wi' the wall o' the harbour?

A. Well, ye can see them at low tides, the holes in the concrete, ye see.

Q. How did ye repair them?

A. Shuttered them up. Build a shutter against the face and then pour in concrete, or ye filled little sandbags wi' concrete and built a wall and then ye fitt it wi' loose concrete in at the back.

Q. What happened when the water came back in, did the water nae jist pull it away?

A. No, gets hard ye see. Sometimes it wiz quick drying cement.

Q. How long were ye at the diving?

A, Oh, till about 1940, atween '39 and '40.

Q. And did ye iver find onything in the water?

A. No, nae really. I eence got the father o' an adulyptus doon in Macduff. I sent it hame in the bus tae her.

Q. After yer marriage, how did ye manage when yer faimily came along, on such a low pay?

A. Oh, well, penny pinching I suppose. Sometimes we got a good help frae my mither, well, they hid a chip shop at this time, ye see, in Portessie. If I went there for fish and chips it didna cost me anything ye see. She eesed tae bake scones tae.

Q. Where about wiz the chip shop?

A. It's pulled down now, bit jist at the second rock at Portessie. It wiz a wooden fronted building.1 She wiz good tae us that time.

WIFE He went frae Sloch, tae Cluny Terrace and he hid a chip shop there, his father, and i mind somebody saying tae me "Willie Milne his fult an affy lot o' hungry bellies".

Q. Did ye get dole money then?

A. Aye, 28 shillings a week. There wiz na wye ye cuild get a job.

WIFE There wiz aie time he came hame frae Stonehaven, Wullie Smackery (Murray) died in Buckpool, Waldie telt, him tae go and see him about a job, and he wiz there for forty odd years.

Q. Is that where ye went aefter ye left the diving?

A. Aye.

Q. Did you go away to the War?

A. No.

WIFE He wiz at taking in planes and that, taking in boaties and that, time of the war. He got commendation frae the Prime Minister. Him and Frank, that wiz my sisters' man, got this sea-plane, she wiz upside doon at Invergordon, Sunderland flying boat.

Q. There hidna been many divers then wiz there?

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A. Oh aye, there wiz Frank, and Cant, frae Buckpool.

Q. Now, when ye said ye went frae Buckie tae Invergordon and that, how did you get frae Buckie tae there?

A. Well, I wiz in digs in Macduff, ye see, we hid tae stay there. At that time it wiz the Fishery Board hid a' the harbours ye see.

WIFE That wiz the Swallow ye gied in, that wiz the name o' it. They hid a' the gear an' that for diving.

Q. Ye gied up wi' drifter tae Invergordon for diving?

A. Aye.

Q. Wiz it a Buckie boat?

A. The "Swallow"

Q. Fit wiz the number o' it?

A. Oh, now, I cuildna tell ye that ane.

Q. Did ye jist go frae Buckie tae lift those planes or did ye stay up there?

A. No, as long as the job lasted.

WIFE That wiz my brither in law and him, one each side.

Q. How did ye lift the plane?

A. Flootation barges.

Q. Did ye pit them under the water and blow them up?

A. Aye,.

Q. What did ye do with the plane once ye got it up?

A. Oh, that wiz the airmen's job then.

Q. How far out in the water were ye?

A. I dinna ken, it's deep water up there.

WIFE I mind him coming hame aefer taking a chapfrae Lossiemouth oot o' a plane, his wife wiz on the beach waiting for his body tae come in. I mind him telling me he hid a ring on his finger and the skin wiz gone. I think that's the wye he hiddna been called up, he wiz working for the Air Ministry, in Buckie, through Hamiltons, they hid a contract ye see.

Q. That's maybe why ye werena called up.

A. Maybe. I certainly waited for it every day, eesed tae come in and look at the mantelpiece, expecting it every day.
WIFE Then he gied and lifted something and put his disc oot and he wiz off work, in hospital and he wiz in plaster frae there, richt doon as far as possible, for six months, he wiz hame a while, and then he gied awa back tae his work wi' the plaster on.

Q. Fin ye were diving?

A. No. aefter that, fin I joined Hamiltons.

HR 35	DATE OF INT.: 14. 6. 88	NO OF TAPES:	COPIES USED:	
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AL NAME:		TELE NO:		RELIGION:
				POLITICS: CON
DATE OF MARRIAGE 24. 12. 1932	SCHOOL LEAVING AGE 14	COPYRIGHT AGREEMENT		
DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH: 17. 8. 1910 BRORA		BROTHERS: _____ SISTERS: _____ BIRTH POSITION: 1		FATHERS JOB(S): FISHERMAN
OTHER PLACES LIVED:		INFO. JOB(S): KIPPERER FISHERMAN DIVER		MOTHERS JOB(S):
		SPOUSES JOB(S): _____		