Q: This is an oral history interview with Frankie Walker on 31st May 2018. By Coleen Samuel, my full name. But also present are Lucy Lo and Eva Tausig from Thames Festival Trust.

Q: Okay, so we’re going to start with some factual information about you. Could you give us your full name please?

A: Francis Frederick Walker

Q: What is your date of birth?

A: 12-11-42.

Q: Whereabouts were you born?

A: I was born at Mottingham, that’s Mottingham and not Nottingham because some people get confused.

Q: So what were your parents’ names?

A: Elizabeth Walker and George Henry Walker.

Q: And what were their professions?
My mum was a school cleaner and my father was a stevedore in the docks.

Do you want to say a bit more about what he was doing?

Erm, well really, erm, he didn’t talk much about the docks as such, you know, he didn’t have conversations in the home when he was doing the work, no. So there wasn’t a lot I could add to that. We was the type of family that, erm, basically we didn’t really talk a lot, you know, there was no conversations around the kitchen table or anything like that. We were just, erm-, I always think of it as dysfunctional family unfortunately [laughs].

And whereabouts did you go to school?

I went to school at Mottingham, was the first one. Then I went to Eltham Green, erm, and that was the last school that I went to, Eltham Green was the last one.

So does your--., your family obviously has connections with the river but Eltham’s quite a long way from the Thames isn’t it, so...?

Yeah, well my two brothers, erm, Johnny Walker, he was the eldest. He was an apprentice to the river, same as I was. And Albert Walker, he was an apprentice to the river and they was apprenticed by my mother’s brothers. All the waterage was on my mother’s side, and nothing on our father’s side. So, it was all done through my mother’s side, her father, or my grandfather, was a waterman lighterman himself.

And his name was?

Erm, I don’t really know [laughs], I can’t think, no.

No, but he was a fully qualified master waterman was he?

He was, yeah, yeah. He had his own boat and, erm, he used to go out whenever the--., he had a regular job where the ships would come off and he would go off to the buoys and tie them onto the buoys. Because, erm, with my grandfather, I only ever see him once in my life and the same with my grandmother, I only see them once. As I say, because my family are,
call it dysfunctional, my eldest brother who was not on the river, he was apprentice to gas fitting. He never lived with us for-- and, erm, I never knew he existed until I was about 13, which as I say, a dysfunctional family. And, erm, one day my sister said to me, “And your brother’s coming over to see us because he’s just got married.” What? Who? And erm, that’s how it happened, you know, he came and see us and, erm, the brother who apprenticed me, which is Albert Walker, erm, he came off the river when he joined the Army, you know, he was called up. And he never went back to the river because he--, he went to live at [Luton 0:05:17] and he thought it was too far so he went and found other work off the river. But he apprenticed me [coughs] and I went on the river and, erm, in 1964, when I rode for Doggett’s, our company that I worked for, I worked for Maritime. And they was taken over by another company called Mercantile, so when I went and worked for them, because they had too many men, if you take a company over you have to take all their hands, even though they never had enough work for them. So we ended up where we was going to work and just sitting around all day and, erm, my eldest brother, who as I said, he was a gas fitter. He said to me-- well he came off the--, he gave up gas fitting and he went and tried to hire boats off the beach at Camber Sands, and it wasn't very successful. Then he took the cafe over at Camber Sands, that wasn't successful because of the weather. So he met a friend and his friend said to me, “Why don’t you come back to gas fitting?” So he said, “No, I'll never come back to that,” he said, “No, they’re taking on contractors because they've got too much work.” So he went and my other brother, Albert, went and joined him and they went off gas fitting and he was earning twice as what I was earning in the lighterage because then there was so much work and the gas board was desperate to get people. They were over paying them basically so, erm, they said to me, as I said, when we got took over and I was sitting around doing nothing. And at that time, anybody who wanted to leave the lighterage or the docks could go out on temporary release, which meant that you could go and get a job elsewhere but if they wanted you back they could call you back. And if you wanted to come back they had to take you back so that was the deal, so I thought to myself, I'll give it try. And I went into the gas fitting field and I never returned to lighterage again after that and that was in 1964, after I won Doggett’s-- well a year after I won Doggett’s.

Q: But what was it that first, erm, drew you to the river in the first place as a young lad?

A: Well, it’s-- it’s the in family, isn’t it? It’s a family thing, you know, because my grandfather and my uncles were all in the lighterage, you know. That’s basically what I wanted to do and then when I got into that, and I heard about Doggett’s, that was my goal to win Doggett’s, you know.

Q: So when did you start rowing as a....?
A: I got into rowing, erm, I worked with--, when I was in Maritime, there was two people there who were Doggett's winners, erm, [name? Ray Easterling 0:08:30] and Charlie Dearsley. And they was doing well at rowing and one day--, and the lighterage and the docks had, erm, had their own sports thing. And they used to have a regatta at Putney every year and one of the things that was entered there was a four, which was the lighterage fours. So the two Doggett's boys said to me in the company, would I row with them in the four. And, erm, so I said, “Yeah,” so they said to me, “You have to join a club, we're going to take--, what we want you to come down the Popular and Blackwall and do a bit of training in the four. But you’ve got to join the club, you know.” So I joined the club, we rowed in that race and we won it and that's what I use down the club now, that I trained for them two weeks and my first [part 0:09:30], you know. None of them could do that [laughs] after two weeks training.

Q: Well that was a good start, excellent.

A: That's what spurned me to become a rower and, you know, I've never left the club since.

Q: So you're member of the Popular and Blackwall Rowing Club, that's the only club that you've...?

A: That's the only club--, I have rowed with other clubs but I've always been a member of Popular and Blackwall because of, erm, Cruise you can't get them all out of one club unfortunately. So, sometimes I would go and row for the [Leigh 0:10:12] in their eights, you know, and [Leigh 0:10:18] wouldn’t let you row under your own name so you rowed under [Leigh’s 0:10:22] name, you know. The entry was under their name which caused a lot of problems in all clubs because they didn't like you going rowing for somebody else, you know. Basically, it caused a lot of friction didn’t it? You used to get people pull you up but, erm, a lot of the Doggett's boys from our club [coughs], because they wanted to go on, they went and joined London Rowing Club and other clubs [up above 0:10:48] you know. So they left our club and Martin Spencer's one you know, that I can think of and, erm, [the Dewars 0:10:58] they all went and rowed up at London somewhere, you know, for different clubs during their career. But I never ever left the club, I always remained a member.

Q: So what was it that made you decided to do the apprenticeship for the waterman and lighterman?

A: Well you had to, that was part of the deal, you know, you get your master, who was my brother takes you to the union and you have to get permission from the union to work on the
river. Then once you’ve done that, you’re an apprentice then, you automatically get apprenticed.

Q: And was rowing part of that apprenticeship?

A: No, nothing to do with the apprenticeship whatsoever. But they, erm--., when I finally got my freedom, they were pleased that I was a rower, you know because I told them I was going to row for Doggett’s you know, they wanted people to row for Doggett’s so they was really pleased that I done it.

Q: So what does it, er, to gain your freedom?

A: It’s, erm, basically automatic, you know, after you’ve done your apprenticeship, you go before, erm, a committee and they ask you questions on the river. You have to know all the bridges for a start and where the tides sets at different places, and erm, you have to know the high water, low water and all those sort of things. You actually go to school for a little while, junior apprenticeship and, erm, you learn all the bridges and everything. And then you go before this committee and they ask you questions on the river. And then if you get them right, they say, “Right, you’ve got your freedom of the river now.”

Q: So what does being a waterman mean to you?

A: It meant a lot at the time, a real lot, yeah you know, it’s what--., when you leave school it’s what you want to do because it’s in the family isn’t it? And my two brothers were already apprenticed and they was working on the river, that’s what I wanted to follow. And my dad worked in the docks anyway, you know, everybody, erm, in Bermondsey and Rotherhithe and Wapping and all that, all worked in the docks didn’t they? In some way or other, in warehouses, everybody went into the dock industry basically. And lighterage was the top thing in the dock world, you know, docker and stevedores didn’t mean anything you know, if you was a waterman and lighterman, it was the cream of the--., of what you’re doing.

Q: Excellent, yes. So you’ve talked a bit about Doggett’s already, but what were your early impressions of Doggett’s and when was you first aware of that race?

A: Erm, well I was aware of it when I was a child, you know, it was mentioned by my parents, you know, because of her father being a waterman and lighterman. So, the history of Doggett’s
came down with that didn’t it, you know, that it was one of the things that you wanted to achieve. Like some people like to achieve their exams don’t they but just as an ordinary person, my ambition was to be a Doggett’s winner.

Q: So what makes the Doggett's race different from any other race?

A: Er, it’s the length and you have to do it on your own. You do it in a sculling boat on your own, you’re not with other people. You get--, and the other thing is, in my days, you could only row the once. If you lost that year, you wouldn’t go again. But now, they do several times don’t they now?

Q: So, erm, about the moment--, tell us about the moment that you found out that you would be competing for the Doggett’s? How did that come about?

A: Well you have to, erm, you have to go to the fishmonger’s company and register yourself as a competitor for the race. And, erm, it’s basically automatic anyway, anybody who enters will go into the race anyway, you know. Sometimes you get, erm, there is occasions where they get too many, they can only row six on the day. So they might have a preliminary races before that to--, but my year there was five of us in it but there was only three rowed on the day, the other two dropped out.

Q: Do you know any of the other competitor's on the Doggett's race?

A: I know them, but I didn’t know what they was up to because they wasn’t doing it from my club. One of them was training up at [Scullers 0:15:52] I think. And the other one, he was rowing in the [name? Yargosey 0:15:59] crew which was an eight, which was a dock crew. That was the docklands board, they had their own eight, they financed them, so one of them was in that eight. So I didn’t know what he was up to, you know, or how good he was going to be on the day.

Q: So what role did your family play, er, in supporting you? I mean, you’ve mentioned your brother but, erm...

A: No support from my family whatsoever, no.
Q: But your brother was the master?

A: My master, yeah but he, erm, he lived a [Rootham 0:16:36] and, erm, I only see him occasionally. He had nothing to do my master after that, I just went into the lighterage and found my own way through it. As I say, it’s-- dysfunctional family you think, like my other brother, he was still living at home at the time, my oldest brother. [Coughs] I wouldn’t ask him anything, where to do or anything, you know, I was completely independent person, I wouldn’t ask. Sometimes you go to a wharf--, you get sent to a wharf and you don’t know where it is, do you? So I get the book out and I look in the book and find out where it is and work my own way how to get that, and it was like that. I was completely-- I would never ask anybody for anything and the same thing with rowing, I never asked anybody to train me or help me whatsoever. I was completely independent person.

Q: So what about your training regime? How did you organise that?

A: Well with the training, erm, you obviously join the club and then you’re competitive with the other people who are rowing. You know, people have joined so you want to beat them and just so you’re a competitor, whenever you go afloat you want to beat someone and that’s how you are. And, erm, that’s why the-- there’s a difference between our generation and the generation that’s coming along. They see rowing as a different thing, they see rowing as a thing, oh I want to row and that’s all they want to do. They don’t want to be competitive and beat somebody else. Some of them still go to regattas and race, you know, but I don’t feel there’s that real drive to win.

Q: So, when you doing your training, were you doing it through your club mostly or...?

A: Well [not only 0:18:30] through the club, [coughs] there was a [job? four formed 0:18:36] down the club and, erm, two of them were related and the other two wasn’t. And one of them dropped out and somebody in that crew said to me, would I come and join them in the four, which I did. So I rowed with them for about four years in this crew, and then somebody else left, you know, one of the family members left again and the crew fell apart then, you know, so I just stuck with my sculling mostly. But as I’ve said, I rowed in eights competitively, you know, I’ve rowed in fours, I’ve done doubles. Erm, I’ve been to Nottingham and I’ve won loads of pots you know, all over the place.

Q: So your master who was officially your brother, erm, what role did he play then in your training?
A: Not--, nothing whatsoever, no. As I said, I was completely independent.

Q: How important was winning to you?

A: Winning was really important, yeah, yeah. I would be disappointed if I didn't win.

Q: So tell us a bit about your plans for and how you organised things for the build up to the race day, you know, preparing for it.

A: My only build up for it was, as I say, I was training six days a week anyway and I was doing a lot of mileage on the river. And all I done was took a fortnight off before the race to prepare for the race. But then again, I was still independent, you know, I just took my own boat to the regatta or to the Tower Bridge, that's where I put the boat in there. And somebody I knew came along and helped me in the boat. And I went up to the start, on my own, with my own ideas and nobody was going to beat me on that day. So they just couldn't because when I come off the start I took the lead straight away and that was it, I stayed in front.

Q: So, did you--, were you aware of any tricks or sabotage ideas from your competitors?

A: No, no, not in--., that doesn't happen in now days. When there was a more money involved, erm, in the 1800's something, you know, they did all these tricks, you know. They put people out to come across you and try to put you off and things like that. But there's lots of things that on the day, it depends on the wind. Normally you would stay in the middle of the river to keep in the main flow of the tide [coughs], but if it was really rough in the middle, some people would go along the shore and try to cut the bend off and things like that. But most of them come unstuck, you know, it didn't pay off for them, you know.

Q: So what boat were you rowing in?

A: The Doggett's people, erm, Waterman's Hall, you know, it's Fishmongers Company who supply the boats. They are all supplied by them so that each one you're using the same type of boat. So you can't just go along and row in your own boat, because it would be unfair as some people will have a better boat than the others won't they? So Fishmongers Company supply all the boats for the day and you collect them about two months before the race from
the Fishmongers Company. Well I put mine in Popular and Blackwater and there’s where I trained from in that Doggett’s boat.

Q: So, I’m going to the day of the race, erm, we found that there was a short movie taken.

A: Yes, I’ve got that, yeah, yeah I’ve got the recording of that. But the only thing about it, is its not very good recording, you know. When you see the shots of the river but it was done by [Phafy News 0:22:43] and, erm, you’d expect the photography would be much better than what it is, you know.

Q: So did you have any sort of rituals or anything, just preparing for the race or are you...

A: No, no, no, no, nothing like that, no. It was just go and hope.

Q: So when you did it, were you aware that Prince Phillip was, erm...

A: Yeah I was told beforehand that he was going to attend because of the 250th year, so...

Q: And that was the reason was it, for him coming particularly?

A: Yeah, that was the sole reason to celebrate the 250th race.

Q: So, you were very honoured to win it.

A: On the day, yeah.

Q: So, erm, in the film which I watched very briefly, the commentator said it was likely to be a crackerjack race. Now what does that mean?

A: I don’t know, I couldn’t tell you what a crackerjack. He was expecting it to be close I suppose but it wasn’t because I went into the lead by Southwark. I went through Southwark Bridge and I was in front and, erm, they never caught me after that. In fact, Franklin, who rode in the
eight, I was surprised that he got past by all the boats because he was so far behind, that the boats started to pass him, you know.

Q: You said that five initially entered, erm, two dropped out for--, you don’t know why?

A: I don’t know why, no.

Q: So who were the other two competitors?

A: Murphy and Franklin, with me. Murphy, everybody was expecting him to win because he was bigger than me, you know, he was six foot plus which is good for sculling, you know, it’s better to be taller isn’t it? And so, I think the bookies put him down as the winner but I was the fastest so [laughs].

Q: But you knew them anyway did you, those...?

A: I knew Murphy, erm, from the lighterage school, he went to the same--, he was there when I was there. That was only for a brief moment I knew him, not as a--, not after that, once we left the school, we--, he went and worked for another lighterage company and I went to another one so we never see each other after that.

Q: And the other chap?

A: Franklin, he, erm, he was member of our club but once he went on the road for [Argesley 0:25:17] I never seen him again, you know, for about three to four years, he was just rowing for [Argesley 0:25:25]. And they used to train at London I think, they was up in London I think they were. I think [Argesley 0:25:33] rode from London.

Q: Yeah, I’m not sure but, erm, what tactics did you use though for winning?

A: Tactics? My tactics was to get off ... off the start and get in front because once you get in front you can watch your opponent right? If he picks it up, you can pick it up, you’ve got the big advantage. All racing’s the same, once you get in front you can, erm, just sit there and look at them. And, erm, you either pick it up or you can drop it off. And psychologically they’ve lost,
once you’re in front, they start to slack off and think, oh I’m not going to win this, I’m not going to catch him, you know. And that’s how rowing is unless you get into the upper rowing which is international rowing, they think differently. They row their races completely different, you can be behind in an international race and then still win the race, you know. But as an amateur, it’s very hard to be behind and catch the person in front, very hard.

Q: From the film, I saw that the water seeming to be running very fast, I just wondered, do you remember the state of the tide and the direction of the wind and that sort of thing and...?

A: Not on the day, no I can’t [both talking at once].

Q: No? There wasn’t anything particular?

A: There was nothing, erm, wrong with the race on that day. I don’t think there was a high wind, I don’t think the water was rough, it’s always rough in areas and it’s always rough on the start funnily enough, you know. It gets a bit rough there, I mean, once you get going through the bridges it smooths out again. But the tides always runs fast there because generally it’s always on a spring tide, which is a good running tide, you know. On a [state 0:27:30] boat, you can feel the water rushing past you, you know, and as you go through the bridges you can hear it flowing through the bridges, you know, fast.

Q: I was going to say that--, when Doggett’s time, of course there wasn’t many bridges at all but now, of course, there are lots so does that make a lot of difference to the race?

A: Well no, it doesn’t, no. There are some people who get too close to the [buttons 0:27:53] as they go through but if you’re looking where you’re going, you keep to the centre of the [buttons 0:27:58], you know. There are people who hit the [buttons 0:27:59], you know, and fall out, you know but that is all part of sculling. You have to look as well as row.

Q: So were your family there at the finish?

A: Yeah, my mother was there, my father wasn’t there but my mother and my brothers were there, yeah.

Q: So, what, erm, what was it like when you actually knew that you’d won?
A: Well it was relief wasn’t it? Once you’ve gone over the line and you know nobody can catch you know, its complete relief you know. You’ve done it, you’ve done it haven’t you? You’ve won what you wanted to win.

Q: So what did you do afterwards?

A: Erm, not much, my wife was there actually and she was my girlfriend, you know, at the time and, erm, she was there as well. So, erm, I'm not a celebrator, I don’t drink and I don’t smoke so I don’t celebrate basically [coughs] in that sort of way I'm a very quiet person, very reserved. As a youngster, I was very shy, you know, that was--, that is one of my biggest problems. I was very shy and, erm, I couldn’t go into shops on my own and things like that. I don’t know what you call it nowadays, but there’s probably a word for it now but it was my problem, that's why I couldn’t ask people to help me in anyway.

Q: So describe the experience of being fitted out for your wonderful coat and badge.

A: Yeah, they tell you were to go and you go along and they fit out your--, do your fittings and go back a couple of times just to try it on and things like that.

Q: Are there special outfitters that just do coat and badge?

A: There’s only--, there’s only one outfitter I think at that time that done it. I should imagine there’s only one outfitter that does it now.

Q: So, erm, when did you first wear your coat and badge?

A: Erm, to your presentation. You go to Fishmongers Hall and they present with the cup, you know, which is what happens to every winner. You win the race, you get your coat and then you go to the Fishmonger’s Hall, presentation day. All the Doggett's winners go round the sides, all the existing ones round the sides. You go up the middle to the, erm, the, I don’t know what to call them, and they present you with the cup which has got a drink in it as it happens. But you drink and they drink and, erm, they present you with the cup. And, erm, my wife, who was at the time, and she was up in the gallery. Your parents or anybody could go up in the gallery and watch it.
Q: Wonderful occasion.

A: Yeah, it is a big occasion, yeah. It's a big dinner they have there.

Q: Oh so you stayed for a meal afterwards did you?

A: Yeah, we do, yeah, you get a meal [coughs], all Doggett's--, it happens every year. As you say, you go around the sides, the presentation takes place and then you all come out. You go downstairs and have a meal, everybody who is there, Doggett's person gets a meal. It's quite good, yeah, it's the best part about it.

Q: So how significant was it for you winning the Doggett's?

A: Oh absolutely, it was the thing isn't it? It's--, you can't win anything better. It was the big thing, the biggest race in your life, you know, it's better than all the other races that I won after that, you know. It was the thing.

Q: So what have you gained from winning, personally?

A: What have I gained? [Pause] No, erm, nothing else from--, no, I wouldn't say I've gained anything other than winning. A lot of them gain because they go to the Lord Mayor's what's name don't they, and they go to a lot of banquets. If you go to--, if you're invited to a do, you get paid for it that day and, erm, a lot of them go there because there's generally free drinks so they go for the drink, don't they, you know? And the money and things like that, yeah but you know, I never, erm, bothered with the drinks and it wasn't part of my life, you know.

Q: And if you hadn't won, would it have made a big difference to your life?

A: Well, it'd be just a lost, wouldn't it? It's something, you know, another lose you know, I wasn't going to lose though, was I? It's impossible. I was [rowing 0:33:05] on the day to win.

Q: Has your relationship with the river changed since you won? As the status of waterman?
A: Erm, well it's declined hasn't it, terrible, you know. There's only the ferries going now isn't there? They all work on these ferries, their wages have all gone down, you know, they're on minimum wages now and long hours. It's completely different to what I was used to, I mean lighterage was all about overtime basically. You could earn more in lighterage than you could in say, the post office or any other menial job that was around, you know, because you could do the hours, you know, as many hours as you want basically.

Q: So when have you worn your coat, your Doggett's coat since then--, since winning?

A: Oh, it's, erm, ten years ago [I'd assume 0:34:05] because as I said, I put weight on. It's embarrassing isn't it when you can't do it up.

Q: But what sort of occasion would you wear it at?

A: I, erm, the last time I wore it, I was, yeah, it was, erm, at a funeral which is [Ray Stoin name? 0:34:24]. His wife wanted me to attend and we carried his coffin, there was two of us attended [coughs]. The other one was [Shaun spelling? 0:34:34] Collins and we carried the coffin. I went to Kenny Collins' funeral, he died before him--, before Ray and, erm, we carried his coffin. There was four of us then who carried his coffin.

Q: And you were all in your Doggett's coat?

A: [Both talking at once] yeah, yes. I just managed to get into it then [laughs].

Q: Impressive sight I'm sure.

A: Yeah, erm, Kenny Collins get buried at Greenwich down in the Greenwich, what's name? The, erm, in the admiralty place there but its Greenwich College isn't it? It belongs to Greenwich College and they've got a church in there, I don't know if you've ever been there because there's a church in there. And that's where he got himself buried and then we went on the fast ferries because [Shaun spelling? 0:35:37] was the owner of it so we all had a meal on the--, took us out for a ride on the, erm, Clipper.

Q: And that was a waterman's wake really?
A: Yeah, yeah, there was a load of them, waterman there. It was packed, packed to capacity. Kenny Collins was a drinker so he knew a lot of people.

Q: So how are these races that are different, you know, the Henley and the Olympics and these other races, how are they so different from the Doggett's race?

A: Well they're harder to win, Henley because you get international going there so it's--, we've got two people from our club who have won it at Henley. Erm, Kenny tried, Kenny [Devarne 0:36:39] never won it, he tried diamond sculls but he never won it. But two of them won in the double, which is one of them you won't see because he's too ill but the other one you will see, erm, which is Bobby Prentice. I don't know if you've got him on your list, they won at Henley in the doubles. With Rogers--., Martin Spencer but he's very ill, I don't know if you've heard about him, no?

Q: So in your experience of rowing on the Thames, were you ever aware of the, erm, gentleman amateur rowers versus the, erm, working class professional rowers?

A: [Pause] Professional, I wouldn't say the working class were professionals, I think they was more professional than us because they had more time on their hands to train, you know, that was the unfair part about it. If you was a teacher or something, and you've been to regattas you'd be racing them and they could train more times on the water that you could because you was working late. You know, I didn't know what time I was going to finish work, you would--., come five o'clock they could say to you or you were always phoning your company at five o'clock and they say, you know, go down so and so you've got a barge out tonight, you know. So you never knew when you were going home.

Q: But you competed in many other races you said.

A: Yeah, yeah but, erm, that was because of me, the way I was, you know. I always put myself out to get there if I could, you know, to the club. I would meet people there, a friend of mine that I used to row with in the double, we'd meet there at half past seven at night, you know. And we'd go out Saturdays at five o'clock, you know, when everybody else was gone, you know. We'd meet down there at five, it suited us and to get out and make sure you got on the boat--., on the river, you know.

Q: So has your perception of Doggett's changed over time do you think?
A: Yeah because of, erm, obviously when you’ve only got one chance of winning, now they get several chances, you know. And, erm, it’s sort of downgrades it a bit in some way. They was talking about, erm, bringing other people into it like Redgrave and [all them 0:39:21] just to keep the tradition going. So they were considering bringing people from outside the lighterage to do, you know, at one stage.

Q: So what do you see the future of Doggett’s? Will it last do you think?

A: Erm, [pause] I can’t, you know, they’re still apprenticing people but they’re working on these ferries aren’t they? Even now, you know, we’ve got one boy come down here, Bobby Prentice has brought him down, he works for him but he can’t motivate him, you know, he comes sometimes and then you won’t see him for a couple of weeks and rowing is not like that. Once you decided you’re going to do Doggett’s, you’ve got to do it every day you know, you can’t win Doggett’s without doing the work.

Q: So how important is it to you that Doggett’s race continues?

A: It should continue but, you know, what happens if you haven’t got no--, it goes off the river, you know. As I say, just open it to colleges and things like that, it just won’t have the same effect, you know. It belongs to the waterman and the lighterman, you know but I can see it going, you know, anybody could enter sort of thing, you know, just to keep it going.

Q: And what is your current relationship with the river now?

A: The, erm, I’m drawn to it, unfortunately. Once you’ve worked on the river, you’ve got to keep going back, you know. I could have--, a lot of the lighterage people, they moved miles away now, you know, they’re too far away to ever come back to be on the river, you know. But, I’ve always lived here because I can get to it, you know. I’ve never dreamt of moving further out and getting a better home. I’m wedded to the river unfortunately, I can’t get away from it [laughs].

Q: And what do you do on the river now?
A: At the moment, I am doing nothing on river, I can only train inside the gym because of a
disability with my foot which is going to be---, I'm going to have an operation in [pause] August.
I've been waiting three years for it, you know, it's been going on for three years and as I say,
the foot is affecting my spine, you know, in some way. My back aches all the time, I'm in pain
all the time, I can't get away from it.

Q: So you haven't been training other young apprentices lately?

A: No, I haven't got the what's name? If I train someone I would expect them to win but the
attitude down there is, oh I've got somewhere else tomorrow and you know, I can't train
tomorrow. I just couldn't put up with it, you know. The person who trains the boys---, the
young kids down the club---, the other thing is they now need the, erm, RYA, you have to go for
a training course to be a coach now. You can't just set up--, you can't coach people from
experience, and you've got to go on these courses now to, erm, to coach anyone. You know,
over the years a lot of the Doggett's people who have rowed, I'm gave them my life you know,
I've been out with Gary [Anness 0:43:00] and all them people, you know, he won Doggett's.
And, erm, you'd pass your advice on to them, you know, that's all you can do, you know, but
never actually said, "I'm going to train you." There's a lot of people that didn't win Doggett's
that are expected to win, you know. They thought they was good enough to win but as you
say, once you get on that start, if you nerves gets too much for you, you've had it, you know.
You just can't get going that is the thing. Once they say, go, you've got to go.

Q: So are there any things you'd like to say that we haven't touched on so far?

A: Not really, no. I think you've done everything that I want to say.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

Q: Well thank you very much indeed. That was most interesting, thank you.

Q2: Can I ask you--, can I ask you is there any very special or memorable thing, apart from
winning, you know, is there any special event that you could recall?
A: Well you know, there's certain regattas that you want to win, one of the Nottingham which is an international race, you know, that is the next thing to win and I've won that about four or five times up at Nottingham in pairs and doubles and sculls [I've done 0:44:43]. I've always wanted--., I always think that if you win something you've got to do it on your own otherwise you...

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